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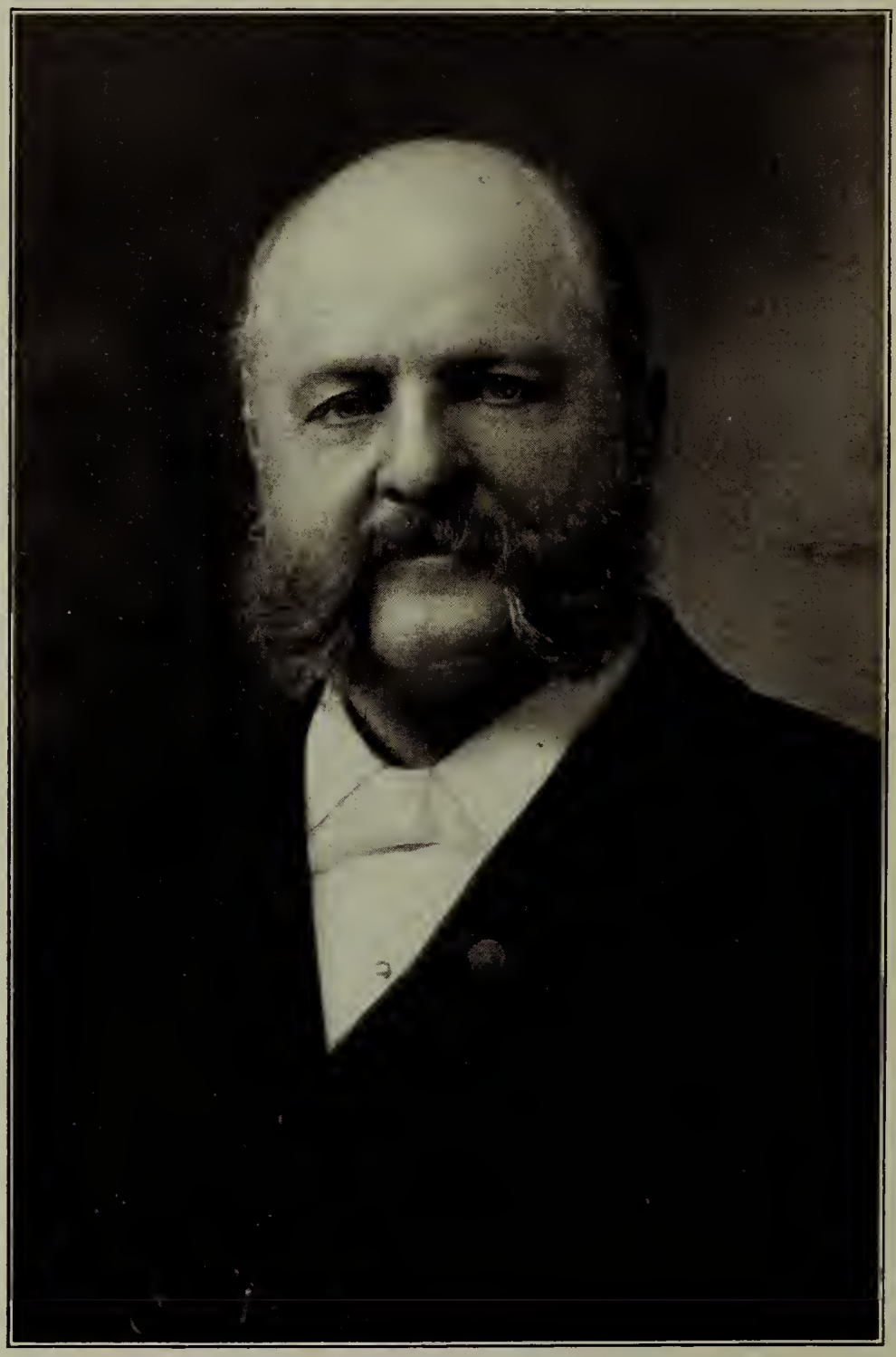

Anthony Comstock.

Anthony Comstock, Fighter

Some Impressions of a Lifetime of Adventure in Conflict with the Powers of Evil

By
CHARLES GALLAUDET TRUMBULL

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To

his mother, and to mine

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I

IN TRAINING FOR THE FIGHT

EARLY one morning in the year 1862, in the village of Winnipauk, Connecticut, an eighteen-year-old boy who was clerk and general helper in the country store was given the disturbing news, by an Irishman who rushed excitedly in, that a mastiff hound in the village had gone mad and was running amuck, and "would be bitin' the children." The hound, of the formidable sort used to hunt slaves in the South, belonged to the local saloon-keeper. The Irishman told the boy very emphatically that somebody ought to put that dog out of business. And the boy believed it.

He got a gun and a pistol, cleaned and loaded them, and asked another young fellow about his own age to join him in looking after the dog. Oh, yes, he would go, was the answer,—after breakfast; but his courage oozed out and his mind changed before the time for action came.

The country-boy clerk was scared, too; thoroughly so. He was downright afraid to go for that dog. So he went to his room and prayed to God for courage, and for success in killing the animal. He had a very definite notion of what he proposed to do, and he knew where to go for strength and guidance to do it,—two characteristics of his later life. Getting up from his knees, he took his firearms, locked the door of the store, and started to look for the dog.

There were two roads, either of which he might take. One went up the side of a high hill, the other ran along by the river, and they left each other at a fork in the road along which he started. In the angle of land formed by the separation of these two roads was a row of tenement houses, occupied by the Irish and other poorer mill-workers of the community. A retaining wall some seven feet high supported the bank on the lower side.

Providence turned the young fellow's footsteps into the lower road. A woman screamed to him from a tenement window that the beast was "forninst the other end" of the row of houses. Starting to climb up the wall to get to the upper road, the boy heard an un-

earthly howl, and saw the dog coming for him on the run, about twenty feet away, the jaws of his massive head wide open and dripping with foam.

There was just time to jump down and back, and get his gun up, as the dog reached the edge of the wall. He fired, hitting the beast between the shoulders, full in the breast. The dog rolled over, and a bullet through his brain, from the pistol, finished the business.

And just then a call came to hurry over to the schoolhouse, to take care of another mad dog that was there! The young volunteer dog-killer reloaded, went on the run, and found his second dog in a little hollow. This time he fired too high, over the animal's head. Instantly the dog was up and away on the dead run across a field, while the clerk stood by the open bars at the edge of the field, trying to get another charge into his muzzle-loading gun. As the dog reached a stone wall on the opposite side of the field he must have caught sight of the figure in the rear, for he wheeled squarely around and came back as though shot out of a cannon.

The boy saw now that he could not get

his gun loaded in time, and he stopped trying, seizing it instead by the barrel, determined to stand his ground and club the dog to death if possible. He was steadying himself for this harder battle,—the dog now about thirty feet away,—when he heard two sharp reports from behind, and the dog dropped in his tracks. A neighbour had come to the rescue and fired the saving shots in the nick of time.

The Connecticut boy had had his first taste of mad-dog hunting, and in the experience he had learned that a man who will throw himself and all that he has into an effort to protect others will be protected by his heavenly Father while the dangerous work goes on. So he determined to try his hand at another kind of mad-dog extermination.

The owner of the first dog killed kept an infamous "joint" in Winnipauk, where he sold liquor to women and children, who made a practice, as it was alleged at the time, of taking groceries to him and exchanging them for drink. The boy who had put an end to the dog wanted to see the more dangerous work of its owner closed up. He appealed to the sheriff. That official was

afraid to take any action. After a while the saloon-keeper sold out his business and "good-will (!)" to some men from New York, who let it be known that they were going to keep the place going whether or no, and run both a gin-mill and a gambling hell. The fact that they had not even a liquor license was a detail that did not trouble them.

One day the boy whose fighting blood was up went to the place and asked if they had any apples for sale. The people in charge knew the young fellow only as a clerk in the village store, and suspected nothing, giving him a good opportunity to look things over. A few nights later a self-appointed vigilance committee, consisting of the boy alone,—he had taken no one into his confidence,—went up to the gin-mill, wrenched off a shutter, climbed in, opened the faucets and drained off on to the floor every drop of liquor in the place, fastened up a conspicuous notice stating that unless the place was now closed and kept closed the building would come down, and retired with something of the same consciousness of having done a good job completely that was felt when the first mad dog lay dead and harmless.

To be sure, the dive-keepers had given out word that if anybody tried to interfere with them they'd shoot him. But the mad dogs had given notice of similar aggressiveness if anybody should interfere with them; and somebody had interfered. The dive-keepers did not keep their word; instead, they went back to New York, where they could be freer —for a while—from the attentions of a fanatical and determined young countryman; and they never came back to Winnipauk again. "And that," says the man who ran them out, as he tells the story to-day with a twinkle in his eye, "was the only temperance lecture I ever delivered in that town, though I was a member of the 'Sons of Temperance.'"

The first saloon-keeper had gotten into the clutches of delirium tremens before this. Some time after, the country clerk happened to be driving this man's wife from the railroad station to the village, and she, not knowing that he had had anything to do with cleaning out the dive, told him with heartiness what a blessing it had been to her husband that he had given up the business and that the place had been closed out. Later

the man broke entirely with his drink habits, and became a sober, dependable workman.

As in the hunt for the mad dogs, the eighteen-year-old country boy had to go into this thing alone,—except for Him before whom he laid the whole matter as he talked it over on his knees before he dared make the attempt. Either affair might easily have cost him his life. He went into both encounters because he saw that the lives of others were being imperilled, and no one seemed ready to accept the responsibility of ending the public peril. No one but himself. And he had no more equipment for the task than had David with his sling and his pebbles—and his God—against the Philistine bully. The thing had got to be done; no one else seemed likely to do it; so young Anthony Comstock volunteered.

His life was at stake each time,—but what of that? The lives of *others* were at stake, and he had been brought up during his eighteen years of boyhood to understand that moral heroism was the only thing really worth while in this life. A Christian mother of the old-fashioned New England sort had filled her boys' heads and hearts with the

realization that we are in this world simply to make it a better world for others to live in, and if our lives get lost in our efforts to accomplish this, that is a good way and a good time to die. From that morning in 1862 when the Connecticut boy started out determined to make it either the dog's life or his own for the lives of others, down to this present year 1913, when he is still vigorously at it, he has been recklessly throwing his life, always for the sake of others, into the teeth of brutes who are worse than mad dogs, bent on destroying the bodies and souls of all whom they can reach, and savagely determined to destroy any one who tries to interfere with their business.

He has not always come off as easily and as unscathed as he did in his Winnipauk encounters. As you look into Mr. Comstock's face to-day you may notice a deep scar, several inches long, running across his left cheek. It is a lifelong reminder of the slash of a knife, severing four facial arteries, made by a criminal whom he was taking to jail one day in a closed carriage in Newark, New Jersey. The knife cut deep, but not deep enough to end the life of the man whose work

God intended should go on for a while longer. So an infernal machine that was carefully prepared to blow him into eternity, and that even reached his hands and was opened by him, was hindered in its mission at the last moment by the God who arranged for the firing of those needed shots over the country boy's shoulder just before the mad dog reached him. And some smallpox scabs, sent to him by mail, might have done deadly work with him, but they failed. Through all the failures of others to stop his work, or kill his body, or ruin his name, or destroy his character, he has pushed steadily on, making a shining mark of himself for deadly attacks from many a death-dealing human creature because of his relentless and successful purpose to put just as many of such creatures as he could out of their sphere of activity while God gives him life and opportunity.

It has always been a source of profound gratitude to Mr. Comstock that those two mad dogs in his boyhood adventure were killed *before a single child had been bitten.* It is one of the heart-sorrows of his life that this cannot be said of the more dangerous beasts of prey against whom his life-work is

directed. He knows, as others cannot who are not intimately familiar with the far-reaching ramifications of the traffic in vice and obscenity that fears him as it fears no other living man, what an endless web of moral entanglement may be started by any one of the venders of this sort of thing before he is held up in his crime.

But the brighter side of the battle is the tremendous repressive result of Anthony Comstock's work, worth even more to our land than his directly suppressive work. No one can ever know how much traffic of this sort has been prevented from ever coming into existence simply because of the relentless war waged by this uncompromising fighter against the men who have dared to engage in the traffic. For every criminal that is put out of this business, still more criminals wisely decide to refrain from entering the business. And for both these blessings we have Mr. Comstock to thank.

II

THE MAN AND THE BOY

AT sixty-nine years of age, Anthony Comstock is a man whom few would care to "run up against," either physically or legally. Standing about five feet ten in his shoes, he carries his two hundred and ten pounds of muscle and bone so well that you would not judge him to weigh over a hundred and eighty. His Atlas shoulders of enormous breadth and squareness, his chest of prodigious girth, surmounted by a bull-like neck, are in keeping with a biceps and a calf of exceptional size and iron solidarity. His legs are short, and remind one somewhat of tree-trunks; but they carry out Abraham Lincoln's recommendation as to desirable leg-length by being long enough to reach to the ground. His calling is that of a fighter, and he has a fighter's build.

When you come to look into his face, you find that his light blue-gray eyes, set moderately deep under a splendidly broad brow and dome-like forehead, look out at you straight

and fearlessly, with never any shifty roving, but always an arrow-like directness that can win confidence and love or throw down uncompromising challenge. His eyes are almost exactly of the colour of his old-time friend's —the late H. Clay Trumbull,—who could also fight upon occasion. A characteristic common to the two men is the quick flash of Mr. Comstock's eye when he is crossed in any way. He is intolerant of opposition, and impatient even of interruption. Like most men of conspicuous achievement, he is a "this-one-thing-I-do" man. He brushes aside interruptions as though saying, "*I'm going through with this to the finish: let me alone.*" He fairly bristles with an atmosphere of unstoppable determination. Two or three deep-cleft vertical lines cut into the brow just between the eyes. The mouth is not enough covered by the moustache to conceal its bulldog set. The chin is smooth-shaven; the "mutton chop" side-whiskers—delight of the cartoonists employed by the papers that take their fling at the man who wastes no time over them—only half conceal the long scar on the left cheek, relic of one of the many attempts on his life.

Those blue-gray eyes that can flash fire can also look at you very winsomely, when their owner wants them to. One has but to see a child come within Mr. Comstock's range of vision to realize the love for children that is a mainspring of his ceaseless warfare against the enemies of childhood. Over and over again have I seen him turn from what he was doing or saying to speak lovingly to some little child—whether acquaintance or stranger made no difference—who came within reach. He has a smile brimming over with kindliness. When talking about anything that stirs him deeply, he has a way of drawing in his upper lip, as he speaks, that gives an impression of self-restraint coupled with an intensity of feeling that one realizes is a source of power.

All this goes with Anthony Comstock's sturdy, indomitable, self-sinking fidelity to his life-task. He was, as he tersely puts it, stationed in a swamp, at the mouth of a sewer, some forty years ago. The assignment was not a pleasant one ; but it was *his* assignment. When on picket duty in the army he had learned to accept assignments of unpleasant duty, and to stay by them until relieved. If

stationed in a Southern swamp, as he was in army life, it made no difference that there were rattlesnakes and other poisonous dangers thick about him. That was his post of duty, until relieved; and from picket duty at the sewer-mouth position to which he was called in 1872 he has never been relieved; therefore he is still on guard. He says of it with a heartiness that carries its own conviction, "I have more joy in the service of my Master at the point where He has assigned me than I could get anywhere outside that narrow little place."

It is dreary work, much of it; but he never lets that make him a dreary or a cast-down man. His cheery good nature is fairly effervescent. He loves a joke, either in the telling or the doing, and keeps his hand in with both kinds. His optimism and love are never overshadowed by the conflicts of his daily life. His devoted wife testifies that, in spite of the degrading matters with which Mr. Comstock has to deal, and the maligning and abuse that are heaped upon him, he comes home at night, after the strain of a day at his office or in the courts, showing no trace of bitterness or resentment against his enemies.

His very prayers,—which are a sure test of the real man,—after a day of such strain reveal only the simple, childlike Christian faith that the New England boy breathed in at his mother's knee.

It is to that mother, who died when her boy Anthony was only ten years old, that this man of faith and daring believes he owes all —next to divine strength—that has enabled him to live his life and do his work. She was Polly Ann Lockwood, daughter of Samuel and Deborah Lockwood, and wife of Thomas Anthony Comstock; and it was in the village of New Canaan, Fairfield County, Connecticut, on March 7, 1844, that she brought into the world the boy who was to make his father's name famous. Those were not the days of race suicide, and Mrs. Comstock had ten children, of whom seven lived to grow up. The family home was a farm, two and a half miles from the village. From their farmhouse they could see Long Island Sound shining in the sunlight, and Long Island itself. Still more interesting, in sight ten miles away at Horse Neck, Greenwich, was the old church by the long flight of stone steps down which General Israel Putnam—"Old

Put"—was said to have ridden on horseback at full gallop, that venturesome day when he preferred this breakneck risk to sure capture by the British.

The Comstock home was an unpainted farmhouse, with a workshop beside it. Mr. Comstock senior, a devout Christian man, was a farmer who also owned two sawmills and supplied lumber for buildings in Stamford, ten miles off, and elsewhere. With a farm of a hundred and sixty acres, he would sometimes employ as many as thirty men, and kept several yoke of oxen busy.

Week-day mornings Anthony would be up and out at four o'clock to feed the stock, cut wood and bring it in, and make himself generally useful. The mother was one of those who taught her boys to do everything. To-day one of Mr. Comstock's hobbies and pastimes is expert cabinet-work. His home is filled with pieces of the most beautiful workmanship in this line—done to rest and amuse himself when he wants to forget for a while the stern pressure of his life-calling. Another hobby is stamp collecting. He has carried on his collection for years, and has some eight thousand varieties now, with perhaps thirty

thousand duplicates. He is always ready to "trade" stamps with fellow collectors.

On both sides of the family, the Comstocks were sturdy, typical, long-lived New England folk. Many of Anthony's great-aunts and uncles attended the Episcopal church in New Canaan. But his own family church was the Congregational. His father would hitch up a four-seated wagon Sunday mornings, fill it with family and farm hands, and drive the two and a half miles to church. In winter it was no uncommon matter to have to take along shovels to clear away the snow-drifts. Sunday-school was held immediately after the morning preaching service, in the gallery of the church; then lunch was eaten in the horse-sheds. About the time lunch was finished the bell would ring for afternoon preaching service; then followed the drive home. One of the family always remained at home on Sundays to cook four o'clock dinner for the returned and hungry worshippers,—the boys and girls taking turn about with their mother at this. Many a time did young Anthony thus cook the family meal. In the evenings some would frequently go back to the closing church service of the day, returning to be

refreshed with pie and milk. Daily prayers were conducted every morning, before breakfast, and the hired men and servants, as well as the family, were expected to be present.

This was the sort of home and life in which the boy Anthony grew up ; and the centre of that life was the New England Christian mother. She was loved by every one. Twenty-five years after her death one of the men who had worked on the farm said : "Anthony, there wasn't a workman on your father's farm but fairly worshipped the ground your mother walked on. She was never known to speak an unkind word to any one."

To-day, nothing is quite so sacred to her grown-up boy as the memory of the children's Sunday nights with their mother. Sunday was no bugbear in that home. She would gather the children round her, close up, and tell them stories. These stories were often from the Bible, sometimes from other sources ; but always they were stories of moral heroism. That one thing she instilled into the minds and hearts and breath and blood of her children, until it became, for one at least of those children, the great outstanding essential in character and manhood. Purity, principle,

duty, were watchwords often on the mother's lips; expediency and policy, never. She acted upon the principle that a child's mind is receptive, and must have something to think about. It must have an ideal, too; so she deliberately sought to create in her children an ideal that was lofty, clean, and heroic. She kept them well supplied with stories of adventure and heroism,—and always with moral courage as their key-note. "Such stories to-day fascinate me," Mr. Comstock will tell you. "I don't care that"—with a contemptuous snap of his finger—"for your blood and thunder stories. But I do enjoy the story of any man or woman, boy or girl, who sacrifices self for principle."

Harking back to his mother again, he says with earnestness: "I'm not entitled to much credit if I stand out against some things in a way that makes people characterize me as puritanical"; and he adds with some conviction: "*I cannot but feel that the teachings of my mother are vastly superior to anything that my opponents can offer or recommend.*"

The boy lived on the farm until he was in his teens, and attended the district school half a mile away. He was healthily mischievous

at school, and remembers plenty of lickings that he undoubtedly deserved. For example, when sent out to the woods to fetch a switch for his own chastising, he would thoughtfully nick the switch on his way back so that if he was struck an extra hard whack it would break! A worse punishment, because more humiliating, was being sent over to sit with the girls, wearing a sunbonnet the while.

Perhaps a boyhood experience with the liquor problem made it easier for Anthony to be the total abstainer from alcohol as a beverage that he has been all his life. One of his duties was to drive the cows home from pasture every night. On the way lived a certain boy whose house he was forbidden to visit. One night Anthony did visit there, while coming back with the cows, and the boy brought out some home-made wine which he warmly recommended. The boys drank it together. Anthony felt somewhat hilarious that evening at home, and was glad to get to bed. The next morning he had quite a "head" when he woke up. But he got up, and he and his father retired to the cow-shed. That is the only time he remembers ever having drunk liquor as a beverage in his life.

The reformation was quick, drastic, complete. He has never used tobacco. When the doctor was sewing up the facial arteries that an assassin's knife had severed in Mr. Comstock's cheek, years later, he remarked significantly, "There's no rum or tobacco to come out of *that* wound."

The boys of that day had their games, such as tag, quoits, and ball, but none of the organized baseball that is so common now. The moral life of children of that time was just as exposed to danger as it always is in city and country,—and always probably more so in the looser atmosphere of the country. While the boy's childhood days were chiefly filled with the things that make for good, yet there were vicious characters in school and on the farm,—some of the hired help being abundantly so, which was a great sorrow to the mother. Mr. Comstock bears testimony to the common experience of many when he says that certain things that were brought into his life in those boyhood days started memories and lines of temptation that are harder for him to overcome than anything that ever came into his life in later years.

And so it is that he has spent himself

to the uttermost, during a long lifetime, to stop the poisoning of other children's minds and lives if he can. He knows what an awful and lasting poison is the poison of impurity. Once gaining entry into a life, through book or story or picture, it stays. It is so much more to be dreaded than the mad dogs of his Winnipauk experience. Yet we are better safeguarded from mad dogs, for if a boy or a girl is bitten, an outcry is raised, the parents know of it at once, and everything that can be done is done. Not so with the images of defilement that strike into boy and girl life. Often none know of it but themselves; and there the images stay, to be called up freely and used at will by the Devil. But the Devil has had greater difficulty in making deposits in childhood's banks to draw upon at will, since Anthony Comstock entered business against him.

III

THE MAKING OF A SOLDIER

IN an Episcopal church on the Plaza in old St. Augustine, Florida, one Sunday during the dark days of our Civil War, a Connecticut army chaplain was conducting services. He had been doing this work since the arrival of his regiment, the Tenth Connecticut, for there was no Protestant pastor in the city, and the townspeople as well as the boys of the camp needed his care. But now his regiment was to move on, the Seventeenth Connecticut having come to relieve it; and this was his last service in the church. The meetings must not stop,—he was sure of that; but who was there to continue them? Finally he singled out a twenty-year-old Connecticut lad in the regiment that had just arrived, and, after the meeting had come to a close, he handed the boy the keys of the church and said to him with magnetic heartiness, "Keep up these meetings."

The boy took the keys from the older man, with bewilderment and a sinking heart. He was not a seasoned veteran in either the Federal or the Christian army, having been enlisted in both but a short time. Yet he was accustomed to obeying orders; he had been trained in that all his life, and army discipline was fixing obedience deeper than ever in his nature.

The chaplain who turned over the keys and the heavy obligation was H. Clay Trumbull, of Stonington and Hartford. The private who received the new commission was Anthony Comstock, of New Canaan. The incident strengthened an acquaintance which grew into intimacy and friendship as the years passed; the two men loved and admired each other throughout the lifetime of the elder.

While Comstock's regiment remained at St. Augustine, he carried the responsibility of the meetings that his chaplain friend had begun. Whenever a minister could be secured to preach, that was done; when no minister was available, Comstock would get a religious paper and read a sermon aloud. The young layman was sexton and supply at

the same time; he would call the meetings by going up to the belfry and ringing the bell for five minutes; then he would wait five minutes, then toll for another five. And in that five-minute interval he would pray hard for help for the task that he so dreaded. His prayers seemed to count; a number of the men of the regiment were converted there.

The Comstock boys could not stay out of army life while there was a fight for principle waging, though there were the usual—and unusual—inducements for them to keep out of active service. The old homestead at New Canaan was in the hands of the sons when the war broke out, for the loved mother had died half a dozen years earlier, and the father had gone to Europe on a business venture that promised much, but that did not succeed. The farm was mortgaged, and the mortgage was held by certain local sympathizers with the South who threatened to foreclose the mortgage if the boys entered the Northern army. This did not stop the boys' enlisting. The threat was carried out; the mortgage was foreclosed, and the farm was lost. But the Comstocks had learned to believe that some things are more valuable than others,

and they preferred to lose a farm and hold on to honour and duty, rather than to keep the farm at the expense of those less marketable commodities.

Anthony's older brother Samuel was the first to enlist, and was made a sergeant in the Seventeenth Connecticut. Just before the battle of Gettysburg he was in charge of a commissary train, and had a comparatively easy and safe time of it in this position,—entirely too easy and safe to suit him. So he applied to his colonel to be relieved in order that he might share the hardships and dangers of the other men. His request was granted; he joined the fighting ranks; and in the first day's engagement at the battle of Gettysburg, on Barlow's Knoll, he received his death wound. He lived through weeks of suffering, wasting away from one hundred and eighty pounds in weight to less than one hundred, and died in a field hospital. His army comrade, Justus M. Silliman, told the grief-stricken younger brother that the brave soldier's last words, in that rough field hospital, were

> "Jesus can make a dying bed
> Feel soft as downy pillows are,"

and then he fell asleep. His name is cut in a monument at Gettysburg to-day.

It was to fill this brother Samuel's place that Anthony, two years younger, enlisted in December of 1863, before he was twenty,—a "high private in the rear rank." He had united with the Congregational church a year or two earlier. In '63 the Seventeenth was in the Department of the South, and the new recruit joined it on Folly Island, South Carolina. They were just leaving there, to start for Keowee Island, from which they drove off the enemy. This first introduction to army life was as severe as anything the Connecticut boy had during his entire service. The men had to lie in a swamp all night, spreading rubber blankets under them, covering themselves with what other blankets they could, and huddling close enough together to keep warm. When day broke, they were deployed in an open field, and made tempting targets for a battery less than a quarter of a mile away, which opened fire upon them. Mr. Comstock recalls still the sickening, sinking sensation of being under fire for the first time, the wounded increasing on every side as the minutes dragged on.

In those perilous days, and in the countless times of danger through which he has passed since '65, and in which he still lives, Anthony Comstock has never had the story-book lack of fear which, in real life, marks only the stolidly useless or the brutally indifferent. He has always had that keen sensitiveness to danger, and the conquered consciousness of fear, which go with true courage wherever it is found. He was afraid to go out and meet the mad dogs in Winnipauk; but he went. He feared and suffered under fire during army life; but he stuck to his post. To this day he claims no courage save that which comes to the man who seeks to do his duty. "As God equipped His servants of old, so I believe He equips His servants to-day," he says with faith-filled confidence. He fairly lives on some of the Scripture promises. He finds lasting comfort in two passages:

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

"No weapon that is formed against thee

shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

At Folly Island the regiment had no chaplain, and no religious services. The country boy from Connecticut grew so homesick that he felt he must have the comfort of religious meetings of some sort; therefore he helped to get them going. It was very hard for him to take a leading part,—harder than being under fire; but he did both duties in the same Strength, and he found that there was a little group of twenty or thirty men who gladly joined with him in keeping up prayer-meetings wherever the regiment went. These were a great comfort to the few who felt their need of them.

At Volusia, Florida, the regiment threw up earthworks that were known as Redoubt Kellogg. There was a thick clump of wild plum-trees there, and in the centre of these the men cut out enough trees to make a little clearing, and there they held their meetings. This wooded chapel was the scene of one of the most remarkable conversions of the regiment.

While the regiment was at St. Augustine,

Christopher Rhinelander Robert (later founder of the famous missionary institution, Robert College, at Constantinople), with the Rev. Charles V. Reynolds, came there as representatives of the Christian Commission, and it was in this connection that Comstock and Mr. Robert first met. The famous philanthropist became the Connecticut boy's warm friend, and was in close touch with him in later years. Anthony acted for the Christian Commission at St. Augustine, rendering services to the sick and destitute, receiving keepsakes and forwarding them to friends at home, and distributing religious reading matter. When, in this work, he would come across men who were drinking and gambling, they would sometimes blackguard him roundly. One man who was under arrest, having been court-martialed for drunkenness, was particularly abusive of Comstock, who retaliated simply by leaving his best papers always with this man. Years afterward, in Brooklyn, in a meeting of the Sons of Temperance, a man came up to Mr. Comstock and said, "Do you know me?" When Mr. Comstock failed to recognize him, he explained that he was that abusive camp-mate,

now converted, a "Son of Temperance," and active in Christian work. The seeds sown by the country boy who would not get mad were beginning to bear fruit.

There was strong inducement to smoke and drink in war-time life, when the strain and exposure tempted to artificial stimulant, and the camp-fire comradeship made smoking an almost universal accompaniment of leisure hours. But Anthony held out against both these indulgences with characteristic fortitude. Not merely was tobacco a part of the good-fellowship of the camp, but there were times when the smoke would have been a most grateful protection,—when, in the Southern swamps, the onslaughts of gnats and mosquitoes became almost unbearable. The others smoked; Comstock built smudges. If "smoking" of some sort was a necessity, he preferred to have the smoke chiefly outside of his system.

Whiskey was supplied to all the men, as part of their regular rations; and the raw recruit came in for rounds of vigorous abuse when it was seen that he persisted in throwing away his whiskey-ration instead of giving to the others what he would not use himself.

But when, a little later, the whiskey-drinking veterans fell out of line on the terrible forced marches, and the teetotaler country boy, green and unused to service, not only stood the strain, but carried the rifles of the exhausted veterans in addition to his own, the note of abuse turned into another tune. Then, as always, this man could endure more without whiskey than the others could with. He has followed his rule rigidly through life; not only for himself, but in declining to make it possible for others to drink. As a salesman, after the war, he never "treated" a customer to a drink,—and in those days such treating was considered almost imperative. During thirty-seven years of close association with detectives and policemen he has never offered to buy a drink for one of them, though the doing so might oftentimes have promised to smooth the way for his work. He is ready to provide policemen, and others who may be helping him, with first-class dinners, and to take care of any other legitimate needs for them; but if they want liquor, they must look elsewhere for it.

In the summer of 1865 Anthony Comstock was mustered out, and given his honourable

discharge from army service—of one kind. His life was endangered during war-time, of course, but not more so than during his longer warfare of later years; and his faith was to meet tests afterward that had no parallel at all during his service as an enlisted man. But his army experience helped in the making of a good soldier, and deepened his faith. More than ten years later that faith was to be tested by an experience that the boy of twenty could not have borne up under, when working for vice-suppressing legislation at the nation's capital,—a story that will be told here later. It was with that experience in mind that Mr. Comstock said to the writer, one day during the summer of 1908, as illustrating his view of the way in which God cares for those who trust Him:

"You are in the surging billows, and all you've got to hold on to is a little thread, anchoring you to the pier; and it's very frail, and you're afraid it will break. And then it *does* break,—it is Self,—and you're about to go down. Just then you hear, 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God'; and you see a strong cable thrown out, and you lay hold on it, and feel

safe again. And when your hands grow numb, and you fear that you'll have to let go, you find that some one has put it under your arms and around your body, and you *cannot* sink."

That is Mr. Comstock's idea of God's keeping as he has tested it.

IV

FIRST GLIMPSES OF THE LIFE-WORK

FROM his early young manhood, Comstock showed that he combined an ambition for big things that lay way ahead with an instant readiness to do the little things that were close at hand. The life that most attracted the country boy was that of the successful New York City dry-goods merchant; his dream was to become the proprietor and director of a big establishment of his own. But he took the first opening he had, after the close of the Civil War, by accepting employment in a New Haven grocery store.

Here, as earlier, he was under the influence of a missionary family. He boarded with a Mrs. Robert W. Humè, a returned missionary's wife who was educating her two sons to become missionaries. These boys worked their way through Yale, helping out expenses by getting up early in the morning and delivering papers; and after graduating they both went to India. It was

worth Anthony's while to live in the atmosphere of such a family. One of the sons, Robert A. Hume, became a missionary of the American Board in Ahmednagar, India.

While he was clerking and keeping books in the grocery store, working from early morning till late at night, Mr. Christopher R. Robert, who had first met Comstock in war-time while the boy was conducting services in St. Augustine, and had found the young private useful in helping the work of the Christian Commission, came across him again and packed him off to Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Here he spent several months as outdoor superintendent for the Lookout Mountain Educational Institution, transforming hospital buildings erected by the government into dining hall and dormitories for the school. This institution was established by Mr. Robert, Peter Cooper, and others.

After working himself sick at Chattanooga, Comstock came north again, and went to his brother's home in New Canaan. He was in Norwalk, one day, when he met a banker whom he had previously known, Mr. Le Grand Lockwood. The banker stopped

him, and said: "Comstock, why don't you go to New York and make your mark?"

"I haven't any money," was the answer.

The banker drew a five-dollar bill from his pocket and handed it to the young man. Comstock accepted the money in the spirit in which it was offered, bought a ticket to New York, and arrived at the City Hall with about three dollars and forty-five cents, alone in the world. But he believed that he was now headed on the road for his goal, a self-made merchant.

Without home or friends, the Connecticut boy took a room in a cheap lodging house in Pearl Street, near the City Hall. Then he walked the streets of New York,—putting into practice the teachings of his mother by praying for something to do and trying to answer his own prayer.

At the end of the first week he stepped into an office at 37 Warren Street, and had an interview with a member of the firm of Ammidon, Lane and Company. "Young man, we have nothing you could do," said Mr. Lane. "There is a vacancy, but not such as you would probably take. There's a third porter needed."

It was not just what Comstock had wanted, but he had been asking God for something to do, and here *was* something to do,—and he felt bound to take it. On Monday morning he went to work, making up his mind that, if the place wouldn't honour him, he would honour the place. The pay was good,—twelve dollars a week,—but the work was very hard, chiefly handling large cases of dry-goods, the concern being a commission house that sold only by the case.

The new porter had been taught at home to have a place for everything and have everything in its place. So he set to work to straighten up and clean out the basement, putting everything in order where he was assigned to work. One day the "boss" happened to go down into the basement, and asked the first porter, in surprise, who had "been doing this." "That greenhorn," was the answer. Not long after, the greenhorn was sent for from the office and made a shipping clerk. The wages were the same, but the work was pleasanter, and the promotion was a welcome one.

Because he saw, however, that there was little chance for real advancement and devel-

opment in that business, in the early part of 1869, Comstock resigned his twelve-dollar position to accept a five-dollar place with a wholesale dry-goods notion house, J. B. Spellman and Sons, a few doors below, at 30 Warren Street. Here he had an opportunity to sell goods, learn a business, and grow. He began as a stock clerk; but at once he began to drum up trade at night and make sales for the house, sometimes succeeding in getting customers that other salesmen had failed to land.

But the long hours, night work, and poor food,—when one pays two dollars a week for a room, a five-dollar-a-week salary does not leave an abundant board-margin—began to tell, and the clerk came down sick. The pay had been increased to seven dollars and a half, but the sickness kept Comstock out for two or three weeks. On his return, his employer sent for him and told him that his services would no longer be required in the notions stock. Things looked pretty black to the young fellow. Then the employer added that they wanted a city salesman, and suggested that Comstock take the position, at $13.25 a week. Things brightened up.

Now that he could give his whole attention to selling, he threw himself heartily into it, and reached difficult customers. It was not a great while before his pay went to nineteen dollars, then to twenty-seven dollars a week. By 1871 he had saved up quite a little money, and had bought a house in Brooklyn by paying five hundred dollars down. His marriage to Margaret Hamilton, daughter of John Hamilton, a New York merchant and Presbyterian elder, took place on January 25, 1871.

About this time Mr. Comstock accepted a position in the notions department of the large wholesale dry-goods and general merchandise house of Cochran, McLean and Company, just organized and opening at the corner of Broadway and Grand Street. He went to them as a salesman at fifteen hundred dollars a year, and a commission on whatever he might sell above a hundred thousand dollars a year. The first year he sold nearly up to that high mark set.

Soon he was transferred to a travelling salesmanship, and was sent out to open up new accounts for the house in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. To a certain customer he

THE STRENUOUS VICE-FIGHTER PROLONGS HIS LIFE AND USEFULNESS BY A MONTH OF MIDSUMMER VACATION AT A CATSKILL RESORT.

sold a bill of fifteen hundred dollars, and upon returning to the store found that the goods had not been shipped. The credit man said to him brusquely, "We won't ship those goods to ———; we'll sell him nothing except for cash."

"He has a very fine store," ventured the young salesman. The other man shook his head gloomily. "We'll ship him nothing," he said decidedly.

A day or two later, Comstock's customer himself happened to be in New York, and dropped in on Cochran, McLean and Company. He was a handsome big chap, six feet two or three inches tall. Comstock greeted him cordially, said nothing about any uncertainty as to the shipping, and then slipped into the credit man's office. "Mr. ——— is here," he said; "I'd like to introduce him to you."

"Don't want to meet him; there's no use in my doing so," was the prompt answer.

"Won't you, as a personal favour to me, simply let me introduce him to you?" pressed the salesman.

"Bring him in, then,—but there's not the slightest use in it."

Mr. Comstock introduced the two men, and left them alone. In a few minutes he heard his name called. The credit man was bowing his visitor out of his private office; turning to the salesman he said impressively, "Mr. Comstock, just take Mr. ———'s order for anything in our place that he wants." The undiscouraged Anthony brought his total sales to this man up to a little more than five thousand dollars before he left that day. As the heaps of big packing cases were piling up on the pavement, later, one of the salesmen asked another, "Whose order's that?"

"Oh, that's that young greenhorn Comstock's," was the reply.

Mr. Comstock was very happy in his new work. He had a lovely Christian wife, a comfortable home, an assured position of large future; and he seemed to be in the way of realizing his ambition by pushing straight ahead until he should own a successful business for himself. But he had been coming into contact with something that was destined to have a part in his life entirely beyond his planning or dreaming.

He was twenty-one when he was mustered

out of army service, in the summer of '65; he was twenty-seven when he was married, and in the midst of his successful career with Cochran, McLean and Company. During these six years of varied business experiences he had come to know young business men, over and over again, whose lives were plainly being ruined by their interest in the obscene pictures and literature and other devilish things that they had easy access to. One of his friends had been led astray and corrupted and diseased. In a spirit of bitter resentment young Comstock determined to make the responsible person pay for the ruin he had worked. He found that a man named Charles Conroy, occupying a basement in Warren Street,—in the next block to where Comstock was then employed,—had sold the stuff to his friend. Comstock bought a book from Conroy, found where the fellow kept his stock secreted, then showed the police captain of the precinct what he had bought. The police captain went personally with Comstock and arrested the criminal, seizing his stock of books and pictures. That was in 1868, and was the first arrest that Anthony Comstock ever made for the

selling of obscene books. He was twenty-four years old then, and little dreamed of the life-and-death struggle that he and Conroy were to have together years later.

This arrest was made while Comstock was a clerk with Spellman and Sons. When he had entered the employ of Cochran, McLean and Company, he again found his young men associates being demoralized by vicious books and pictures of the sort that Conroy had circulated. This time he learned that a man named William Simpson, who kept a paper and stationery store in Center Street, near the Tombs Court and city prison, had a circulating library of the worst books ever published in this country. Again in the spirit of an avenger of wrongs done to young men, the clean-lived young Connecticut Christian started on the trail of one of those worse than murderers. He proceeded to secure evidence.

Being green at the work, and not unnaturally assuming that the public guardians of law and morality would be as interested as he in putting a stop to this traffic, he made the mistake of speaking to a patrolman before entering the place, telling him what he was about

to do. He asked the officer to wait outside until he should call him in to arrest the man.

Comstock stepped into the store, and was handed a printed price-list from which to select a book. While he was looking it over, his policeman entered, called a clerk to the back of the store, "tipped him off," and went out. Of course, Simpson's people would make no sale to their would-be customer after that,—but the customer carried the price-list away with him.

Outraged by the treachery of the patrolman, Comstock went to police headquarters, preferred charges, and had the man dismissed from the force. He was beginning to show signs of being the kind of person who has to be reckoned with.

The police-dismissal incident precipitated a fierce newspaper attack on the unknown young countryman named Anthony Comstock. If he had known then what a long line of vilifying newspaper abuse and persecution this was but the beginning of, it might have been more than human nature could have faced. God mercifully shields His children from any such foreknowledge of what awaits them in His service.

The New York newspapers ridiculed Anthony as an officious meddler in affairs that did not concern him, and one paper said that "if this young Comstock is the Christian he professes to be, he can find plenty of these places in Ann and Nassau Streets." This turned out to be valuable information, of exactly the sort needed by one who made a practice of living up to his professions. Acting on the advice that the newspaper never expected him to take, Comstock went to the editor of the New York *Tribune* and asked that a reporter be assigned to make a trip of investigation with him. A reporter named Gifford was sent; together they went through Ann and Nassau Streets, got plenty of evidence, made their complaints, called in the police, and made seven arrests, on March 3, 1872. That was Anthony Comstock's first busy day. He has had a good many since. But it marks the real beginning of his work. The other experiences he had had were but skirmishes.

The *Tribune* now came out strongly for Comstock, publishing a story of the day's work. The other papers merely "roasted" him, as usual. At that time the traffic in vile

merchandise was brazenly open. There were no federal laws against it; there were only feeble state statutes concerning books and pictures, with nothing against other articles. The business was conducted so freely, evidently under the protection of the police, that men actually stood on the sidewalks and solicited passers-by to go into basement shops and purchase books. News-stands displayed such books openly. Peddlers carried the worst kinds of pictures in their pockets, and accosted pedestrians in the hope of sales. About that time Mr. Comstock raided a news-stand against a railing on the sidewalk in front of the church where the Fulton Street prayer-meetings were being held, taking the most unspeakable books and pictures from it.

During these beginnings of the fight young Anthony Comstock had acted wholly by himself. He had had no human friend in the fight. Whatever money had been needed to press the fight had come out of his own pocket. The extent of the traffic was appalling. If any serious effort to stamp it out was really to be made, more persons than a young salesman, who could give only a little time out of business hours, were needed.

What was to be done? It was a crucial time; the man who, through no planning of his own, had become the sole representative of righteousness and decency in this struggle, turned to God and asked what God would now have him do.

V

WANTED: MONEY AND FRIENDS

BEFORE that eventful third day of March, 1872, when Comstock, accompanied by a New York *Tribune* reporter, really began in earnest by forcing the police to make seven arrests of men who were selling obscene books and pictures, he had had an experience that tested his mettle. It was not unlike that of the closing out of the gin-mill and gambling dive during his boyhood days in Winnipauk, Connecticut.

After his marriage, in 1871, he lived in Brooklyn and attended the Congregational church of which William Ives Buddington, D. D., was pastor. The church was about six blocks from the Comstocks' home, and in going back and forth they had to pass a notorious saloon, which ran openly all day Sunday. A special attraction of this saloon was the holding of cock fights and dog fights in the cellar. It was less than a block from Mr. Comstock's house. Chapman, the saloonkeeper, was the bully of the ward; everybody

was afraid of him, and the police never interfered.

In the latter part of 1871 Mr. Comstock gave Chapman a surprise by having him arrested for violating the Sunday law. From that time on Comstock was a marked man. One of the friends who came to his side was a near neighbour, Mr. H. B. Spelman, the father-in-law of John D. Rockefeller. Learning that Mr. Comstock was being threatened, Mr. Spelman went with him into court, and offered him his personal support in any way that should be needed. Another friend, Prof. Homer B. Sprague, whose wife's family was connected with the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, presented Mr. Comstock with a handsome sixteen-shot Winchester repeating rifle,—upon which Mr. Comstock sent word to the Chapman gang that he was prepared to take care of them at the rate of sixteen a minute.

Chapman sent him word that he and his gang would "raid his shanty and drive him out of that neighbourhood." And Chapman told the Comstocks' servant girl that he was going to "do up" Mr. Comstock the first time he met him. One day the dive-keeper

and bully saw his man coming towards him on the street. He stopped him and asked, "Is your name Comstock?"

"That is my name," was the quiet reply.

"I'm going to break your ——— neck for you," was Chapman's immediate threat.

"I have consulted with the Chief of Police and the District Attorney," said Mr. Comstock, "and they have advised me to defend myself against you."

"To ——— with the Chief of Police and the District Attorney," snarled Chapman.

"And this is what I propose to do it with," said Mr. Comstock, ignoring the interruption and drawing a revolver; "and if you make any attempt to interfere with me I'll put daylight through you." The bully made for his saloon in lively fashion, and the incident was closed. Later on Mr. Comstock was waylaid by six toughs, one Sunday night on his way home from church, but he disposed of them with equal success. He did not let up on Chapman, of course, until he had lost him his license and had driven him out of business. The incident is worth noting because it illustrates both the courage and the practical sagacity of this man whose life was to be de-

voted to a calling that demanded wisdom and fearlessness in a high degree.

It was in the second year of Mr. Comstock's married life that the seven arrests in New York were made. He had had a prosperous business experience in the house of Cochran, McLean and Company; there was every reason to expect a brilliant future there, and little reason to doubt his ability to meet the new obligations that he had assumed as husband and householder. Yet a heavy burden lay on his heart. In his close contact with the young business men of the city, he saw them falling about him almost like autumn leaves, withered at the blighting touch of the obscenities that were the staple of so much commercialized traffic. He felt that he must do more to stop it than he had yet done,—he had only touched the surface of the evil so far. But how this could be, with his business obligations, was what weighed upon him.

Soon after, he got possession of a clue that there were four men who were responsible for the printing and publishing of 169 different vile books,—William Haynes, George Ackerman, Jeremiah H. Farrell, and a Ger-

man whose name he never learned, but who was credited with publishing two of the books.

Comstock realized what a wholesale stroke it would be to get possession of the entire stock in trade of these strategic publishers, and he was fired with zeal to do so. But how could it be brought to pass? He was informed that the men were well known to the police and under their protection, the police seldom if ever arresting any dealer in that business. The publishers sent their trade-circulars broadcast, giving titles and prices; the business was enormously profitable, for the books rarely sold for less than two dollars each, and some brought five dollars and ten dollars. They were even advertised openly, and by name, in the newspapers. One dealer had 113 catalogues of the best schools in the country,—a choice business asset. A good man named McDowell had tried, years earlier, to suppress the evil by denouncing it in the public press, describing the books, telling how they were advertised and sold, and naming the persons whom he denounced. The result was only a welcome advertisement and exploitation of

the whole traffic, with no apparent gain at all in suppression.

Making no announcement of his purposes, Mr. Comstock ascertained that one of his quartet, Haynes, was an Irish surgeon, of the Royal College of Surgeons, and that he was living at 50 Balchen Place, Brooklyn. At that address Mr. Comstock found a Mrs. Haynes, who, the instant she learned her caller's name, began to denounce him bitterly. "You killed my husband," was her greeting.

"I never saw your husband, madam," Mr. Comstock answered.

"Well, Grandin [afterward found to be a middleman between publishers and retailers] sent my husband word that Comstock, a ———fool who won't look at money, was after him, and he'd better get out of the way if he didn't want to be taken. That night he died." It was commonly believed that Haynes had committed suicide.

The caller now made a demand upon the widow for the plates and book stock of her husband. She wanted to know what he would pay her for them, saying that Grandin had tried to purchase them from her, and had

offered $3,000. She was a widow with dependent young children, not fairly to be held responsible for her husband's business, and poor because of the heavy blackmail paid by her husband to the police. Comstock had found that the books were printed in Brooklyn and stored in a hotel room in Jersey City, the orders from middleman Grandin being filled from there. Four hundred and fifty dollars was finally agreed upon as a price that seemed fair.

Then came the real problem. The young business man had no money and no friends, yet he felt that he must get those plates into his possession. There was nothing to do but to pray for friends and for means. He did so, asking that he might be shown what he should do in order to stop the circulation of the awful stuff that was now so nearly within his reach. Then he did what he had been taught to do at home, put himself in the way of receiving an answer to his prayer.

The only way that seemed open to him was an appeal to the Young Men's Christian Association of New York City. A letter was sent to R. R. McBurney, the secretary. Mr. McBurney responded by asking Comstock to

write out the whole matter more fully and plainly in order that he might present the case to his committee. Mr. Morris K. Jesup "happened" into McBurney's office, saw Comstock's letter lying on the desk, picked it up and read it. At once the influential and wealthy New York banker and man of affairs called at Cochran, McLean and Company's and asked for a young man named Anthony Comstock. The doorman called out the salesman, who came forward and received a greeting, he will tell you to-day, that he will never forget in this world. Never had he seen a face that seemed more noble in its character, nor a hand-shake more hearty in its encouragement, than when he faced this princely Christian layman, who told him of his interest in the letter. That was the first meeting of these two men who worked shoulder to shoulder in the fight with vice from that day in March, 1872, until Mr. Jesup's death on January 21, 1908. Only a few days before his death the philanthropist sent by his secretary the message, "Give Mr. Comstock my love."

The result of this call was that Mr. Jesup invited Comstock to come to his home,

where the younger man told the story of the four publishers and what a little money would do. On the day after this call Mr. Jesup sent Comstock, through Mr. McBurney, a check for $650, telling him to use $500 of it for securing the Haynes plates and prosecuting the cases, and the other $150 to reimburse himself, Comstock, for the money and time he had already expended in this work for the public good. "It is not fair," said Mr. Jesup, "that you should be at any expense in this matter."

Soon after this, but before getting possession of any plates, Mr. Comstock had an experience that deepened his faith in God's guidance and in prayer. He was on his way to his place of business one morning, and had not yet reached the Brooklyn ferry, when something seemed to say to him, "*Go over to Balchen Place.*" Expediency urged, "But you must go to the store; your presence is needed there to-day for certain customers who are likely to call." He walked on, deeply perplexed, and as he walked he prayed hard for guidance. A cross-town Brooklyn car-line lay between him and the ferry for New York. When he reached that

car-line, guided unmistakably by prayer, instead of going on to New York he took the car to Balchen Place. He found Mrs. Haynes at home, and had been in the house but a few minutes, talking with her, when he saw her glance out of the window with a startled look, seemingly much disturbed. Following her look, the caller saw a covered express wagon backing up in front of the door; in another moment the driver had unstrapped and raised the curtain at the rear of the wagon. and it was seen that he had a load of boxes filled with stereotyped plates.

Comstock stepped out on to the pavement, saying to Mrs. Haynes, "I'll take charge of those," jumped up to the driver's seat, and drove the wagon at once to the Young Men's Christian Association, where he unloaded its contents,—the plates of the twenty-four books that Haynes had published. The Association gave him a small room in which to store the plates until they could be destroyed. Shortly after, the engravings among them were taken to the laboratory of the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, where on Saturday, April 6, 1872, President Cochran, Professor Plympton, and Mr. Comstock destroyed by

acid one hundred and forty steel and thirty-six copper plate engravings. These plates had cost more than a hundred dollars each; it took nearly an entire day to destroy them.

Mr. Comstock's next move was to demand from Mrs. Haynes her stock of books and sheets. She said that she had sold them all to Grandin, on Liberty Street, New York. So they agreed to go together to Grandin's office, where Mrs. Haynes was to order him to turn over the stock. On the morning when they were to do this, Mrs. Haynes happened to meet Grandin before she met Mr. Comstock, and the latter followed them without their knowing it. He heard her say to Grandin, "Comstock has got the plates, and there's the Devil to pay." The two were greatly excited. Mr. Comstock joined the pair, and added, "Yes, and I am here now to demand the books that are stored in Jersey City." When they reached the middleman's office, Grandin talked about throwing Comstock out of the window,—but he didn't do it. Instead, Comstock told him that he knew just what business he was in, and would give him forty-eight hours to turn over the entire stock.

Before the forty-eight hours were up Mr. Comstock received by mail a notification that several packages were awaiting him at the Adams Express Company offices on Broadway, New York. There he found eleven cases of books that had been shipped to him from Philadelphia; these he sent for safe-keeping to the American Tract Society Building, where he secured a room to store them. They were valued at $7,000, and were the books of which Comstock had already seized the plates. Grandin had sent them from Jersey City to Philadelphia in the hope of saving them, but when he found that he was dealing with a man who meant business, he sent them directly to Mr. Comstock.

This was but the beginning of the adventures with the four publishers. Grandin was subsequently arrested and convicted by Mr. Comstock. The hunt for Ackerman will be told later. But the young fighter for the Lord was no longer alone on earth in his fight. Mr. Jesup was back of him from the time of their first meeting. A few weeks later, on May 9, 1872, Mr. Jesup invited his young friend to come to his home to meet a number of the leading men of New York,

and tell them the story of what was being done. At that meeting in Mr. Jesup's home were such men as Morgan Dix, D.D.; William E. Dodge, senior, and his son of the same name; Irenæus Prime, D.D., and William M. Taylor, D.D.; William M. Adams, D.D., and J. Cotton Smith, D.D.; Henry R. Jones, a Brooklyn merchant; District Attorney Garvin, an assistant district attorney named Sullivan, and still other prominent business men, lawyers, and clergymen. To this group the unknown young salesman told how he had, at a cost of $450, seized from $30,000 to $40,000 worth of steel and copper plate engravings, electroplates and woodcuts, book-plates for the printing of 167 vile books, and thousands of the books and sheets themselves. The presenting of such facts to a group of Christian men of the character and calibre that Morris K. Jesup would invite into his home meant that God had now started a work that could not soon cease. Even now, neither Mr. Comstock nor Mr. Jesup clearly saw what was to be the outcome. But two men had been brought together who, having put a hand to the plow, were not of the kind to turn back.

VI

BEGINNING AN ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN

THE tracking down of two of the other publishers in the infamous quartet whom Mr. Comstock had determined to put out of business gives an interesting glimpse of the acuteness, thoroughness and fearlessness that the young New Englander showed from the start in this difficult work, and without which he would have been helpless as a child in the fight against shrewd and desperate criminals.

After checking off in his printed list of books the titles of those he had captured from the Haynes estate and Grandin, Mr. Comstock mentally charged the rest of the books to George Ackerman; and with two exceptions he was correct in this. Then he set out to find Ackerman.

No one could give him any information as to his man's whereabouts. He did learn, however, that an ex-convict named McDowell

who had formerly worked for Ackerman was now supposed to be living with a woman called "Irish Mary" somewhere in Williamsburg, New York,—a suburb of Brooklyn where Comstock himself had previously boarded. It was said that McDowell could be seen at certain times at Broadway and Fourth Street, Brooklyn; also that he was in hiding from the New York police, who wanted him for a robbery of bonds that he was charged with having received and sold. McDowell was said to be a very suspicious man, never going directly home, and often doubling on his tracks and turning to see if he was being followed. Yet this was the human clue by which Comstock hoped to reach Ackerman.

One Saturday night Mr. Comstock located McDowell at his Fourth and Broadway rendezvous. He followed him down Fourth Street to Grand, in Williamsburg, and noted that he would stop every little while, turn, and look sharply for any signs of being "shadowed." In order to guard against discovery, Mr. Comstock kept on the opposite side of the street, and played the part of an intoxicated man; thus he was able unchallenged to fol-

low McDowell up Grand Street two or three blocks, then down a cross street another block, where the ex-convict entered a house. As it was then late at night, the self-appointed detective decided to defer his interview until the following Monday morning.

Early on that day he went over to Williamsburg again, and found that the building entered by McDowell had two doors, close together. Providentially, he stepped up to the right-hand door, and knocked. A woman corresponding to the description of "Irish Mary" answered the knock.

"Is Mac in?" familiarly inquired the caller.

"He is," answered the woman, "but he's not up."

Glancing through the door to the right of where they stood, Mr. Comstock saw a man dressing. Without further parley he pushed by "Irish Mary" and went up to the man, asking if his name was McDowell.

"Yes," was the answer, "and who are you?"

The visitor said he had come to see if McDowell could tell him where he could find George Ackerman. McDowell didn't know him.

"You *do*," firmly retorted the visitor.

"Who are you, anyway?" said McDowell again, surprised at the challenge.

"Anthony Comstock," was the reply; "you and Irish Mary used to bind obscene books for George Ackerman, and you know all about him. I also happen to know you're hiding from the police just now for receiving stolen goods."

"Oh, Mac, we're lost intirely; tell the man where he is," broke in Irish Mary despairingly; and Comstock knew that the day was won.

McDowell still persisted that he did not know where Ackerman was to be found, but he said he could name a man who did: the superintendent of a prominent news agency in Nassau Street, who was also trustee of a church in Morrisania McDowell said he had often taken this man's notes for five hundred dollars in payment for books and had them discounted for Ackerman.

As the two men talked together McDowell had been dressing, and Comstock now left the house with his mind made up to one thing: McDowell would get to Ackerman's friend on the jump; the smartest fellow would

be the one who got there first ; and Comstock preferred to be that one.

He was off for Nassau Street, New York, on the instant, and in a few minutes was being shown into the news company superintendent's office. There he found a stout man busily at work, who asked shortly what his caller wanted.

"I want to know where George Ackerman is."

"Don't know him," was the prompt reply.

"You do."

"I don't."

"You do."

Surprised, as McDowell had been, by his visitor's confident insistence upon the facts, the superintendent demanded his caller's name. This was given. Then the caller went on to tell the superintendent what he knew about the discounting of his notes to Ackerman for the latter's vile books, and announced with convincing earnestness that he proposed to have Ackerman's stock in trade if he had to expose publicly the man he was talking to in order to bring this to pass.

The perspiration began to come out on the church trustee's brow. He then remembered

that he did know Ackerman. "But, young man," he added impressively, "I'll give you a bit of advice. This man Ackerman has been blackmailed by the police until he claims that he is not in his right mind. There was a fire in his place; the police seized his stock, then sold it back to him at a round price; now Ackerman has threatened to shoot anybody who interferes with him again."

"That's a game two can play at; I'll take my chances," quietly responded the twenty-eight-year-old Yankee; and he did not leave until he had insisted on the superintendent's securing for him an interview with the desperate and hounded publisher.

While this conversation was going on, Ackerman's own son was in the same building, working in the employ of this news company superintendent.

The present offices of the Secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice are in a building on the corner of Nassau and Beekman Streets, New York City. In safe-keeping in those offices to-day are specimens of some of the books that Ackerman once published, held with other evidence of the vice-suppressing work that has gone on

uninterruptedly during the more than forty years since that day. And it was in a hotel on that selfsame corner, Nassau and Beekman Streets, that Anthony Comstock and George Ackerman first met face to face, by appointment of the news agency man.

Mr. Ackerman was dressed in the austere garb of an Episcopal clergyman. He gravely inquired what Mr. Comstock desired.

"All of your books and stock in trade, and plates for making French transparency playing cards," was the answer.

"What books do you want?" asked the "clergyman."

Mr. Comstock took from his pocket the catalogue list and indicated the titles of all those that had not been seized from Haynes. Ackerman pointed to one title and said, "*That* isn't my book,"—thus virtually admitting that the rest were.

"What will you pay me?" was Ackerman's next question.

"Not a cent," quietly answered his caller.

"You paid Mrs. Haynes for hers," grumbled Ackerman.

"Do you think I'm going to pay *you* to get out of this devilish business?" asked Com-

stock, indignantly. And he went on to tell him some of the details of his life and business, just to show the man that more was known about him than he suspected. That seemed to startle the criminal publisher. "You will hear from me," he assured Mr. Comstock, and the interview ended. The same afternoon, May 4, 1872, a covered wagon drove up in front of the American Tract Society Building, and unloaded $16,000 worth of steel and copper plate engravings and electroplates for the printing of sixteen different books and unspeakably vile playing card pictures. There were 150 steel and copper engravings, 100 woodcuts, 6,000 French cards, five cases of unbound sheets of books, and half a ton of stereotyped plates. Ackerman was not arrested, but died shortly afterward.

Jeremiah Farrell, the third of the publishers, was Mr. Comstock's next quarry. He had a place in Ann Street, New York. His books differed from the others in that they contained no pictures. Comstock submitted one of the vilest to a police justice. The justice's response was that he would take no action in the matter because there were no pictures

displayed; and Mr. Comstock was practically insulted and ordered out of the court room.

With the same statement of facts, however, the determined prosecutor went into the General Sessions Court and laid his complaint before Recorder Hackett. The Recorder at once issued both a search warrant and a warrant for Farrell's arrest. Before the latter was served the publisher fled the state and went South. It was openly charged that the officer entrusted with the warrant had sent Farrell the message: "Jerry, get out of the way if you don't want to be taken; I have a warrant for your arrest." Farrell's escape was not for long; within two weeks his dead body was brought back from the South and buried. Mr. Comstock was never able to ascertain the cause of his death.

The rôle of clergyman or religious publisher seems to be a favourite method of attempting to screen themselves from discovery, by those who engage in obscene traffic of any sort. Years later, Mr. Comstock once noticed a photographic studio in the Bowery with a sign reading, "Photographers to the clergy." Suspecting it at once, he investigated, and

found a regular business in vile photographing, which he succeeded in breaking up. But for their sign he might never have discovered that gang of vice-dealers.

A man named Thomas Holman was known to have a printing house on the corner of White and Center Streets, in New York, where the Criminal Court Building now appropriately stands. When Mr. Comstock visited him, Holman kept racks full of Spurgeon's sermons and tracts for free distribution in his office, while within a few feet of these racks, on the other side of a board partition separating the office from his press-room, he had just printed the sheets of 10,000 copies of obscene books. These sheets had been sent to a bindery across Center Street, and were there being bound up by young girls when Mr. Comstock entered the premises and seized the stock. They were Farrell's books. From Farrell's Ann Street place Mr. Comstock took several tons more of bound books, making about eleven tons in all. And from Holman's vaults he took almost six tons of stereotyped plates. The plates were broken up and sold to the Rogers Locomotive Works as old metal. The books

were taken in sealed cases to the Platner Porter Company Paper Mills of Unionville, Connecticut, where the cases were opened, one at a time, and the contents thrown into large vats of soda ash and ground into pulp *in Mr. Comstock's presence.* He was ready to "take his chances" with his own life, but he took none with the lives of the children whom he was trying to protect against destruction by the literature that now ended its course at his hands. The proceeds of these sales of metal and paper, more than a thousand dollars, were subsequently turned over to the widow of Jeremiah Farrell.

This was the sort of achievement, wrought single-handed in the face of heavy odds, that Mr. Morris K. Jesup wanted his friends to hear about from the lips of the young fellow himself who had brought it to pass. It was after Mr. Comstock had taken supper with Mr. Jesup in the latter's home that the noteworthy evening meeting was held, of business men, clergymen, and lawyers, as described in the preceding chapter. This conference was followed by the appointment of a special committee from the Young Men's Christian Association to take charge of the

movement against organized vice which Comstock had already so vigorously begun, and which he, of course, was to continue to lead. On May 27, 1872, he was invited to meet with this committee at the office of Mr. Jesup, and there they presented him with a purse of $500 as a token of appreciation of what he had done. His journal entry of that date reads: "Surely the hand of God is in this. Let me glory only in Him. To His holy name be all the praise and glory. I knew His promise would come true: 'In due time ye shall reap if ye faint not.'"

Young Comstock was still in the dry-goods business, and conducting his anti-vice work entirely as an "aside." But God had answered his prayer as to what to do next. He was now backed and supported in whatever he might do by a group of strong men representing one of the great Christian associations of the age. An individual Christian worker of large means was deeply interested in both the man and his work, and stood ready to counsel, support, and encourage. The whole future was not revealed, nor did it need to be. Enough light was at hand to make it plain that God still had work in this

field for the young business man to do. Every step of the way had been preceded by prayer. That being so, Anthony knew that, no matter what the opposition and the difficulties were, he might expect to surmount them. Up to this writing, his expectations have not been disappointed.

VII

LEARNING PATIENCE AT THE HANDS OF CONGRESS

THE year 1872, following the formation of the committee from the Young Men's Christian Association to back Comstock in his fight against vice, was an eventful one. When once the young man had commenced a systematic campaign against the offenders, the enormous reach of the traffic began to be revealed. It soon appeared that there was a tremendous business being done through the mails. How could this branch of the traffic be reached and stopped? There was no law adequate to meet the need. The newspaper exposure of the business following Comstock's first arrests had led to a feeble statute which pertained to the sending of books and pictures through the mails; but this law did not interfere with the transmission of improper articles of other sorts.

So it became increasingly clear to Com-

stock that a federal statute covering the whole evil in all its forms must be secured, and at once, if effective work was to be done. He brought the matter before his committee. The majority disapproved of making any attempt to secure federal legislation at that time. It was drawing towards the close of the session of Congress; there had been fierce assaults on Comstock in the newspapers, owing to the prosecutions and convictions he was securing; his own life was being threatened, and he was being warned by his friends as to the personal danger he was incurring from the evil men against whom he was opposing himself. In comment on such warnings an entry in the young man's journal at that time is characteristic. It reads:

What folly! Can mortal man do aught his Maker does not permit? Cannot God change the purpose of man even though the arm is raised with the deadly weapon clasped ready to strike? Cannot He turn away death from whomsoever He will? All the evil men in New York cannot harm a hair of my head, were it not the will of God. If it be His will, what right have I or any one to say aught? I am only a speck, a mite, be-

fore God, yet not a hair of my head can be harmed unless it be His will. Oh, to live, to feel, to be—Thy will be done!

In spite of the strong disapproval of his committee, Comstock felt that he could not let another whole year go by without the reinforcement of substantial legislation. So he turned to his unfailing friend, Mr. Morris K. Jesup, and told him his hopes. "Go to Washington and try it," said the banker, "and if you get a bill through I'll guarantee all your expenses." Now young Comstock made the thing more a subject of prayer than ever, and then went to work on plans that showed a statesmanship remarkable in a dry-goods clerk.

He made a new draft of a bill that he had gotten up, providing such legislation as he believed was needed, and then he sought expert criticism of his work. He had the Connecticut Yankee notion that "the best's as good as any," so, after submitting the bill to Mr. Benjamin Vaughan Abbott, a lawyer and brother of Lyman Abbott, he went to Justice William Strong of the Supreme Court of the United States, to whom he had secured an introduction, and asked him to put his

bill in proper legal form! Justice Strong was glad to do so, and in addition gave Comstock a letter to Senator William Windom, later Secretary of the Treasury under Garfield and Harrison.

He went to Washington on February 6, 1873. There he turned confidently to a good friend and former newspaper editor whom he had known intimately in Norwalk, Connecticut, when Comstock was living in Winnipauk,—and putting mad dogs out of business. This man, Mr. A. H. Byington, editor of the *Norwalk Gazette*, had large experience in Washington, and knew most of the members of both houses of Congress. He took the young aspirant for Congressional recognition at once to the Vice-President's room in the Senate, and there introduced him to the Vice-President, and Senators Buckingham, Pratt, Ames, Ramsey, Cole, and others, before whom he presented facts that he believed they ought to know. The bill itself had already been introduced in the House by Representative Clinton L. Merriam. Senator Buckingham—war governor of Connecticut—had brought it before the Senate.

It was now found that another bill had been introduced, to secure legislation for the District of Columbia and the territories over which Congress had exclusive legislation. This had been done at the instigation of the secretary of the local Washington Young Men's Christian Association, the Rev. George Hall. Still another bill was under consideration that increased the penalty but did not broaden the scope of the law as the offense demanded. And General Benjamin F. Butler had introduced a bill to amend the inter-state commerce law, prohibiting the sending of obscene matter by common carriers from one state to another. The next move was to merge all these bills, including Comstock's, into one. Mr. Abbott volunteered his services for this. And Comstock received the assurances of all the members involved that his bill should go through.

Within twenty-four hours the combined bill had been prepared, and was approved by Representative Bingham, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the House, and by Senator Stewart of Nevada, a member of the Senate's Judiciary Committee. The new bill prohibited importations of foreign obscene

matter into this country, as well as sending them anywhere in the United States by mail, or any advertisement of them, and protected also the District of Columbia and similar territory. These points were covered in three sections of the bill. A fourth section provided for the seizure, condemnation, and destruction of these things; a fifth provided for the punishment of any government official or employee who should assist in carrying on this traffic or in disseminating any of the prohibited articles.

When this new bill of five sections, introduced by Representative Merriam, reached committee, it was substituted for all pending bills in that field. Senator Windom invited Comstock to call upon him in the room of the Committee on Appropriations. The senator was particularly kind and encouraging, and proposed to attach the bill to the Postal Appropriations bill and thus positively secure action upon it. Then General Butler took the bill to go over it, but promised to return it with immaterial changes very speedily. When he returned the bill, however, he had made serious changes in it, which necessitated its reprinting and return-

ing to the committee for consideration. On February 11th, Mr. Merriam was to have called up the bill for its final passage in the House, under a suspension of the rules which would permit its passage on the same day. But General Garfield, of Ohio, called the regular order of business, and the bill went over.

Of course fierce opposition, in the meantime, had materialized against the passage of the bill. Men who were making their living from the traffic it was to cripple sent letters to members of Congress, signed by fictitious names, or anonymous, charging Comstock with the gravest offenses. The newspapers denounced the measure as unconstitutional, and as interfering with freedom of speech and of the press.

After the bill had failed of passage by suspension of rules Comstock took it again to Senator Windom, who had a revised copy introduced and entrusted to the Committee on Post-Offices and Post Roads. The bill was ordered printed. Windom arranged to have the bill considered by the committee. Comstock appeared before the committee, and their action was unanimous in favour of the bill. The same day it was placed on the

Senate calendar. A personal call on Senators Ferry and Buckingham resulted in their promise of hearty coöperation.

On February 14th it was hoped that the morning session would see the bill considered. Unanimous consent was asked of the Senate to take up the bill, but Senator Edmunds of Vermont objected. One of the senators later said jocularly to Mr. Comstock that "if the Lord's Prayer should come up before the Senate, Edmunds would have some objection to make." Governor Buckingham moved to have the bill sent back to the committee, for the consideration of proposed amendments.

The next day Comstock received a copy of the bill as amended by Senator Edmunds in committee. Senator Windom, who had been away, was now back, and promised to bring the bill up again in the Senate on Monday, February 17th. The following extracts from Mr. Comstock's journal tell the story of the next few days:

February 17th. By an oversight the bill was not brought up.

February 18th. Governor Buckingham called up my bill by unanimous consent, and

it was read by the Clerk. Judge Thurman of Ohio and Senator Casserly of California, not having seen the bill, made an informal objection, and the bill was stayed for the time being.

February 19th and 20th. Was in the Senate, anxiously awaiting the passage of my bill. Governor Buckingham again sought to bring it up, but an amendment was offered by Senator Casserly, with the result of a further delay until the said amendment could be printed. All these delays were exceedingly wearing and harassing.

Representative Potter, Senator Sprague, and others, received anonymous letters denouncing me as a disreputable character, perjurer, and criminal. These were turned over to the gentleman who had the bill in charge.

On February 21st Mr. Comstock had seven cases, pending in the Federal Courts, before the Grand Jury in New York City, and was obliged, in the midst of his torturing uncertainty, to leave Washington and go back to New York. While in New York, his Young Men's Christian Association Committee met and formally approved of what he had done in Washington. Returning to the capital, he found that his bill had passed the Senate. At this juncture it was discovered that a saving clause was needed in order to prevent the

enactment of this bill from practically quashing indictments and prosecutions already instituted under then existing laws. Without such a saving clause the new bill, calling for a heavier penalty, practically repealed existing laws and would have turned loose all who had been arrested under them. Representative Merriam, whose enthusiastic support in the House, where the bill had not yet passed, was so important, greatly deprecated the proposed amendment, urging that any change whatsoever would almost inevitably prevent the passage of the bill in the few days that were now left to work in. Congress adjourned on March 4th ; it was now February 24th. And if the bill was amended in any way, it would have to go back to the Senate for passage again. Senator Buckingham agreed with Mr. Merriam, and urged Comstock under no circumstances to permit any addition to be made to the bill, as it would be impossible, he said, to have it brought up in the Senate again. The public hostility to Comstock and repeated "stabbing in the back" had created doubts in the minds of even the friends of the bill. If the House passed the bill as it stood, that would end the matter in

Congress, the bill could go to the President for his signature, and the fight would be over. In spite of these facts and this urging, however, the amendment without which the enactment would have been almost a triumph for the enemy was incorporated, and the bill now awaited its fate in the House.

Seven precious days remained. During three of these, February 25th, 26th, and 27th, the Credit Mobilier Bills absorbed the time and attention of both houses of Congress. And one of the leading newspapers of New York took the opportunity to publish a savage attack upon Comstock, filled with statements of a sort abundantly able to ruin the reputation of any man who did not happen to have the unstained record of the young New Englander.

On Friday, February 28th, the bill lay on Speaker Blaine's desk, while the House member who was charged with the responsibility of calling it up tried the watching young fighter's patience sorely by quietly reading a newspaper, in evident forgetfulness of his duty. This was the harder to bear because the Speaker had agreed to let the bill go

through. Comstock, not content with his efforts in Washington, had written to Mr. Jesup and Mr. William E. Dodge urging them to use their influence with Speaker Blaine. They had both responded.

Saturday evening came, the first of March. Mr. Comstock walked from the Senate Chamber to the House of Representatives in company with Mr. Blaine. The Speaker promised to call up the bill. Comstock watched in an agony of hope and doubt. A number of other bills were called and passed. The Speaker held *the* bill in his hand; but again the Representative who was supposed to have the matter in charge sat at his desk silent and indifferent.

Then it was that an awful conflict waged in the soul of the young soldier who had been working his heart out to render this service, as he believed, in the warfare of his Lord. It seemed as if the Devil was determined to claim him now as his own, because of the bitter rebellion that surged up within him at the cruel delay or complete failure. There came lashing through his mind the savage, relentless newspaper attacks, and he saw the sneering exultation of their writers

as they proclaimed his defeat. He felt that it was more than he could endure.

Midnight came, and that meant Sunday. He heard a still small voice saying something that he had learned from his mother in the Connecticut home years before: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Expediency argued, "But it is necessary for you to stay here and watch your bill." Duty answered, "Can you expect God to answer your prayers if you don't obey His commands?" He left the Capitol, walked down to Pennsylvania Avenue, then up the avenue to his room; and as he walked, through the cold March night the stress of his conflict seemed to force the perspiration out of every pore of his body. His brain was on fire. Even if he could forget his personal discomfiture, he was facing another full year without a law adequate to check the blighting evils that he now knew he must give his life to blotting out. That thought was too much. He was willing to surrender all he had in doing this work for the Lord, but to this crushing blow in the Lord's own service he could not say "Thy will be done." He reached his room, and he tried to pray.

He could still pray for his bill, but he would not pray for a willing acceptance of God's will if it were to cross his own.

He did not sleep much that night. Tossing in restless discouragement till the night was over, he arose, made a poor breakfast, then sought out the Young Men's Christian Association rooms. They were closed. To sit through church was out of the question Back to his room he went, and tried to forget himself by reading a sermon on "Christian Life," in a paper that happened to be at hand.

Then he broke down, and the surrender came. He dropped to his knees, asked God's forgiveness for his sins, and told the Lord Jesus all his troubles. He prayed first of all, and above all, that he might say, "*Thy will, not mine, be done.*" The entry in his journal for that day reads:

I prayed that, if my bill might not pass, I might go back to New York submissive to God's will, feeling that it was for the best. I asked for forgiveness and asked that my bill might pass, if possible; but over and above all, that the will of God be done.

What peace! What joy! What delight! Oh, how can I describe the burden which

rolled off? The summer's day was never more peaceful than my heart was when Jesus said, "Peace, be still," and sent His peace. I felt then it was for the best, and I was content to have it just as God willed.

He had won a greater victory now than that of forcing a bill through the United States Congress.

On Sunday afternoon he went to the Young Men's Christian Association rooms to keep an appointment he had made to go from there, after the regular Sunday afternoon meeting, and speak to the prisoners at the penitentiary. He was to do this with an active young Christian layman named Smith, who was also an official stenographer to Congress. At the Association, Comstock found Chaplain Newman, of the Senate, who greeted him cordially and asked, "Well, how is it?"

"It is in God's hands; it's all right," answered Comstock. To his amazement, Chaplain Newman said quietly, "Your bill passed the House at two o'clock this morning."

"What?" was all his astounded hearer could exclaim.

The chaplain repeated his words, and continued, "Speaker Blaine called it up just before the House adjourned, and it passed with only thirty votes against it."

"There's a saving clause added to it, and it has to go back to the Senate; but it's all right," said Comstock, with forced calmness; and he took his seat on the platform, in readiness for the meeting about to start.

Then Smith, the congressional stenographer, came over to where he sat and said in an undertone, "Your bill passed last night."

"Yes; Dr. Newman has just informed me."

"I was in the House when it passed," went on Smith, "and I had the clerk send it immediately down to the engrossing clerk and had the amendment engrossed. I then took it up to Speaker Blaine and got him to sign it, and then send it by special messenger over to the Senate. I followed it over, and when the messenger delivered the bill, and the clerk made the announcement, I told Senator Buckingham that it was Comstock's bill, whereupon he rose and moved the passage of the bill as amended. His motion

was adopted, and the bill now awaits the President's signature."

President Grant signed it the next day. And Comstock had prayed "Thy will be done"!

VIII

GOING AFTER BIG GAME: THE LOUISIANA STATE LOTTERY

IT had been on a Saturday, March 3, 1872, that the unknown dry-goods clerk made the seven arrests of dealers in vile literature that virtually started him in his new life-work. Exactly a year later, to a day,—on Sunday morning, March 3, 1873,—the United States Congress passed the bill that was so vital to the successful continuance of this work.

Immediately after the patience-testing passage of the bill there was another surprise in store for the young man. For Senators Buckingham, Windom, Ramsey, and Representative Merriam now united in asking Postmaster-General Jewell to appoint Comstock a Special Agent of the Post-Office Department to enforce the new laws. He replied that he would be glad to make the appointment if Congress would appropriate a salary and "per diem" (expenses) to cover it. The appropriation bill was still pending,

and an amendment was offered, in committee, to cover the needed item.

At this juncture the sagacity and insight of the Yankee fighter began to show itself again. Of his own accord he went before the committee and stoutly opposed the making of any appropriation for the new office to which he was being nominated, asking instead that he be clothed with the proposed authority without salary. He saw that, if a salary was attached to the office, there would be a constant scramble for it among politicians for their friends. His recommendation was accepted, he was appointed a Special Agent of the Post-Office Department, and he has held the office, by reappointment, from that day to this. And for thirty-three years following his appointment he served the United States Government without receiving from it a dollar in salary. He was given one hundred dollars a month by the special committee of the New York Y. M. C. A., at this time, to compensate him for the time lost from his business commission-earnings. How he came to take a salary from the government in 1907 is told later. The title "Special Agent" was continued up to about

a dozen years ago, when it was changed to "Inspector."

Mr. Comstock, to-day, likes to dwell upon what he calls the wonderful goodness of God in those early days of the fight for purity. And it *is* a story of God's work, not of man's, when we remember that it was an unknown clerk, twenty-eight years old, who had the hardihood to go to the national capital with the idea of getting his own convictions put into legislative action; that, finding there two other bills pending in the same field, he stuck to it until all were merged in a single bill of five comprehensive sections; that he prayed his bill through both houses of Congress in the strenuous closing hours of the winter's session; and that he returned to his home under appointment as a staff officer of a cabinet officer of the United States! There were two men in New York who were almost as happy as Special Agent Comstock, when he got back and told the whole story, and these were Mr. Jesup and Mr. Dodge. And the Young Men's Christian Association Committee, some of whom had counted the effort a hopeless one, now gladly paid the expenses of the Washington campaign.

After the passage of the federal bill, amendments to New York state statutes were secured which provided not only for the arrest of persons vending objectionable matter, but for the seizure and destruction of the matter itself. Even while these amendments were pending, however, vigorous prosecutions were started under the new law. As a result of this active work, fierce opposition to those who were seeking to enforce the law sprang up, and, in the attacks upon Comstock, reference was constantly made to the fact that he was an agent of the Young Men's Christian Association. Some of its managers began to grow anxious lest the Association should suffer from this connection. The result was, after considerable discussion, hesitancy, and opposition from certain quarters, that the majority of the Young Men's Christian Association Committee deemed it wise to incorporate a separate organization for the continuance of the work; and thus was born the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.

A charter for the Society was granted in May of 1873. In the autumn of that year the business of the old Committee, which

now went out of existence, was reorganized under the charter. The Connecticut country boy whose dream had been to become a prosperous, self-made city merchant, and who had already made a conspicuous success in the business world, gave up his heart's desire, resigned from all business connection, and became Secretary and Chief Special Agent of the Society. An executive committee of seven members, having direct charge of the operations of the Society, met each month and received the secretary's written report. The president, three vice-presidents, treasurer, and counsel, with the executive committee, comprised a board of managers, and met once in three months, receiving a quarterly report submitted by the executive committee. None of the officers but the secretary have ever received any compensation.

Violations of the law of purity were not the only offenses against public morals which the newly formed Society stood ready to prosecute. Lotteries and schemes of any sort to defraud the public which made use of the mails were infringements of the postal laws, and as such were referred by the Post-

Office to its Special Agent. When prosecutions were thus instituted against the principal lottery operators, bitter hostility was, of course, awakened. One of the methods of the opposition, which has never been abandoned from that day to this, was the attempted demeaning, before the public, of the Agent who was now making it his life-business to enforce the laws. It must be remembered that swindling schemes of all sorts were reaping a harvest of thousands upon thousands of dollars from a gullible public, and that their backers had hitherto enjoyed immunity from any systematic interference. The newspapers also received a large revenue for advertising these schemes. What wonder that any man's determined efforts to put these criminals forever out of business, and to bring to an end the flow of money into the treasuries of the newspapers that shared so richly in the fruits of criminal and fraudulent operations, was met with a desperate and diabolical earnestness that would stop at nothing in the way of infamy, defamation, even physical violence! A notorious English ex-convict was employed by some of the lawbreakers to secure the publication of libelous articles

about Special Agent Comstock. All the interests involved, and they were many, worked to destroy the standing of the man and the Society.

There were several well-known lotteries at this time that had wide-open headquarters in New York City. These operated in defiance of the Constitution and laws of the state, as well as of the federal statutes. It was no unusual thing to find uniformed policemen hobnobbing with the employees, or actually in the offices, of these concerns. More than once "guardians of the peace" were found in such dens when, by those who took the law into their own hands, the places were raided.

The famous Louisiana Lottery was one of these wide-open institutions, with its New York offices at 212 Broadway, occupying two floors over the Knox hat store. At this address a line of ticket-buyers could sometimes be seen extending from the ticket-office on the second floor out into the hall, around the hall, up-stairs to the third floor, down-stairs again, and out on to the street, while uniformed policemen stood by to "preserve order." It was publicly stated in the news-

papers that this one office of the Louisiana Lottery was paying the police five thousand dollars a month for protection.

One day Mayor Cooper sent for Mr. Comstock. Why, he wanted to know, could not this place be closed? And could the Secretary of the Society for the Suppression of Vice close it?

"Yes, Mr. Mayor," was the answer; "that place can be closed, and I can close it; but not with your police."

As a result of this interview, it was arranged that Mr. Comstock should secure evidence against the lottery office, prepare complaints and warrants, and return to the mayor, who promised to appoint a city marshal to execute the warrants.

A day or two later Mr. Comstock was on hand at the mayor's office, with a paper ready to be signed by a magistrate. The mayor filled out a commission, and appointed an employee to execute the warrants. With this man Comstock went to the Tombs Court, where, in the secrecy of a private office, a police justice signed the warrants and gave them to the marshal, and the complaint was filed with the clerk of the court. But be-

fore Comstock and the marshal could get from the Tombs Court, in Center Street, to the corner of Broadway and Fulton Streets, where number 212 stood, word had been sent to the lottery people ; and when the men with the warrants arrived, the large safes were locked, everything suspicious was out of sight, and the persons for whose arrest the warrants called had their bondsmen ready to accompany them. Arraigned the next morning before a magistrate, these criminals gave bail for their trial, returned at once to 212 Broadway, and opened up the place for a new day's business.

Comstock, learning before he left the court room that they had done this, at once reported to the magistrate that the marshal had not been able to execute the search warrant entire, as the lottery safes had been closed and the desired matter secreted. The magistrate directed the two men to go back to 212. Notifying no one, they went immediately, and this time caught everything open and in full blast. They seized about 30,000 letters and lottery tickets, and a set of account books—which are in Mr. Comstock's possession to-day—that showed that the aver-

age daily income of this one office of the Louisiana Lottery, for a period of twenty days prior to the raid, was $5,176. The alleged five-thousand-dollar-a-month payment to the police for protection, therefore, was less than one-thirtieth of the income of this office.

The developments following Comstock's first serious interference with this national and colossal gambling enterprise were interesting and significant. Its proprietors were reasonable men, and hoped that Mr. Comstock was a reasonable man. One of the counsel for the lottery company called at the office of the Society for the Suppression of Vice and made some suggestions. He said that his company would count it a privilege to assist the Society in its work, and as a slight evidence of their good feeling he wished to be allowed to contribute twenty-five thousand dollars a year to the Secretary of the Society, the first twenty-five thousand dollars to be deposited within forty-eight hours, in cash, to the Secretary's account in the Nassau Bank, and no one to know who the donor was. Then the Secretary was, if he would give them this privilege, to receive twenty-

five thousand dollars a year regularly thereafter,—the simple condition being that, in the interest of the mutual good feeling, he would not interfere further with the company's business transactions.

At that time young Comstock had a mortgage on his home, and a floating indebtedness of several thousand dollars. Twenty-five thousand dollars looked just as large and just as attractive to him as it does to most men. And there was no question about the ability and the intention of the Lottery Company to do exactly as it offered,—the yearly amount proposed was only five days' income to them. But there was a something that stayed with the Connecticut boy, out of the old home life on the farm, and from a mother's training, and the rigours and discipline of soldierly obedience during Civil War service, that was more real and substantial to him than twenty-five thousand dollars. Rising from the chair in which he had sat listening to the lawyer's talk, he said quietly, "As long as I live and have my reason and health, your company shall never have another open office in the city of New York."

They didn't believe him. They only won-

dered what he wanted, and they knew that, if they could find out, things could be arranged. Later another Louisiana Company representative called at the Society's office and asked if Mr. Comstock wouldn't enjoy taking a trip around the world, with his wife and daughter, in a leisurely way, say for five years. If travel interested him, his salary for the five years in advance could be paid to him, and any other sum he might care to name for expenses, not in excess, say, of one hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. Comstock replied that sea voyages didn't agree with him.

Strange to say, Mr. Comstock's attitude seemed to exasperate the lottery crooks. It was not long before a Superintendent of Police and a committee of associates journeyed to Washington to make formal demand, through their representatives, that the Special Agent of the Post-Office Department be dismissed and removed. In these efforts to end his unpleasantly effective law-enforcing career, the Louisiana men joined with themselves a number of others who, engaged in similar enterprises, had been bothered as they had been. Among these

were the Kentucky Lottery, with offices at 309 Broadway; the invitingly named Cash Distribution Company, at 599 Broadway; and the Royal Havana Company, with offices in Wall Street and on the Bowery. All these concerns had been raided in that strenuous first year of the new Society's life, 1873. Things had been done on the jump by the twenty-eight-year-old Special Agent.

He was not dismissed; and he has not been yet, though that was not the last time that he was "exposed" to a Postmaster-General of the United States. The federal and state courts were kept busy prosecuting cases in which the Society was the complainant. But the newspapers continued to advertise the lotteries freely, until one day the Grand Jury asked Comstock why the newspapers were not prosecuted, and asked if evidence against them could not be submitted to that body. He replied that he would be glad to secure such evidence,—and in so saying he knew well that the moment he made this move the press of the country would be practically a unit against him and all his efforts.

He had real, not theoretical or academic,

trust in God. Constantly throughout his perilous life he has comforted and steeled himself with the promise in God's Word: "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." He proceeded to secure evidence against every newspaper in New York City that advertised lotteries. He presented his evidence to the Grand Jury, and an indictment was found in every case. The business interests thus attacked represented enormous sums. One paper, it was claimed, carried over five hundred dollars daily of paid lottery advertisements, often having more than a full page of such advertising in a single issue. It was not surprising that, when it became known that the newspapers had been indicted on Comstock's complaint, the New York Chief of Police remarked, "The ——— fool's hung himself."

A test case was tried. It resulted in conviction. The paper appealed to the Supreme Court of the state. The conviction was confirmed. Then the newspapers ceased to

violate the law. It was not Comstock that had hung himself.

In about the year 1897 Joseph Cook wrote:

"In 1885 Mr. Comstock drafted an amendment to the Postal Laws concerning lotteries, and since then, down to the enactment of the present law in 1890, the constitutionality of which the Supreme Court of the United States has recently affirmed, he kept this matter aggressively before Congress. President Harrison and Postmaster-General Wanamaker took up the suggested reform with the result that on September 19, 1890, an act incorporating all the provisions that were in Mr. Comstock's original bill became law. At present, so far as the government knows, not a newspaper in the United States advertises a lottery, and all lottery advertisements and letters are by law excluded from the mails. The new legislation, as sustained by the Supreme Court of the United States, has inflicted mortal wounds upon the Louisiana Lottery, and now that Devil Fish of the Gulf is in the agonies of dissolution."

IX

"KEEPING EVERLASTINGLY AT IT"

THINGS were not made easy for the holder of the office of Special Agent of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. The conditions of testing and blockade that were not occasional but regular accompaniments of his work were such that only a man of the most extraordinary endurance and dogged persistence could hold out in this calling. The intensity of some of the vicious attacks that were made against Mr. Comstock's career, his character, and his life, is shown later. Only less trying was the slippery elusiveness of the criminals that he sought to put out of business and punish. One notorious instance of this illustrates the way in which Mr. Comstock's endurance was tested.

On May 7, 1872, a man named Morris Sickel had been raided at his place of business in Platt Street, New York, where he was found to be employing a dozen or more girls

and boys, of from twelve to fifteen years of age, to make articles of a vile sort. Sickel had been arrested and convicted and had served a year's imprisonment. In 1874 he reopened his nefarious business in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Comstock worked up a case against him for violation of the postal laws, secured a warrant from the United States Commissioner in New Haven, and went with a United States marshal to Bridgeport to arrest his man. There he found that Sickel was in New York; but he seized his manufacturing plant and took a large quantity of his vile goods. Leaving the marshal to make the arrest, the Special Agent returned to New York. There he learned that the marshal had failed to arrest his man, who had made his escape to Montreal. Later, Sickel's movements were traced to Detroit, and then to Chicago.

Comstock went to Chicago, and, after making a dozen or more of other arrests, learned that Sickel was still in town. When a warrant had been secured for him, a deputy marshal was assigned to make the arrest. Ostensibly he made it. But instead of producing his man, the deputy allowed him to

go; later this official was charged with having received fifteen hundred dollars for the accommodation. The Special Agent returned to New York, empty-handed. But he was not through with the case as easily as that.

One day there came to Mr. Comstock's notice a letter addressed to Morris Sickel at St. Louis, Missouri, in Sickel's own handwriting. This probably came about through the dealer's having sent his circulars, with a self-addressed return envelope, to some one who had forwarded the whole thing to the New York Society for investigation. Mr. Comstock now believed that Sickel had a factory for his goods in St. Louis, and went on to look over the ground. There he learned that Sickel's brother-in-law, who knew Comstock, was in charge of the factory, so the Special Agent stayed away from that headquarters. He was fortified, in the way of evidence, with copies of the Connecticut indictment and of the bench warrant for Sickel's arrest (this latter form of warrant being issued by the clerk of the court, as from the judge, after an indictment has been found). Going before the United States Commissioner at St. Louis, Mr. Comstock

made the proper affidavit, based on the indictment and bench warrant, and a warrant was issued in that district for the arrest of Sickel as a fugitive from justice.

Starting out once more with a deputy marshal, and determined this time to stay by to the end, the Special Agent was confronted with the dilemma of how to find his man without going to the factory where there was danger of being recognized before the arrest could be made. So he resorted to detective methods.

As a United States Post-Office official, Comstock took a letter carrier into his confidence, and gave him official instructions. The factory doors were closed to the public; no general admittance was allowed. The letter carrier was instructed to inquire at the factory for Mr. Sickel, and leave word that he was to call at the Registry Department of the Post-Office for a registered letter. While the carrier was inside the factory, doing his part, Comstock was waiting outside, at a safe distance. He saw a man come out from the building, evidently a Jew. Giving him time to get a couple of blocks from the place, Comstock walked considerably beyond him,

then turned and came towards him, looking up and down the street and diligently at the signs, as one who was hunting for an address. Reaching the Jew, he stopped him and asked if he could tell him where Mr. Moses Silleck lived.

"What is his business?" asked the Jew. Comstock explained.

"Oh, that is not the name; you mean Mr. Morris Sickel," exclaimed the Jew, as he pointed out the place. "But," he went on, "he is not here; I was just in there, and he is in Memphis, Tennessee"; and he named a hotel address.

Thanking his Hebrew informant, Comstock left the man and hurried to the post-office, fearful lest Sickel's brother-in-law might come for the registered letter; and there he instructed the registry clerk to decline to produce the letter for any one else than Morris Sickel himself, reminding the clerk of the specific postal regulation that such a letter can be delivered only to the person addressed, or upon his or her order duly verified. Then he telegraphed the postmaster at Memphis, asking whether Sickel was at the hotel designated.

About the time that the brother-in-law arrived at the post-office for the registered letter, as Comstock had anticipated, the Memphis postmaster's telegram had come, saying that their man was there. The brother-in-law, finding that he could not, even though claiming to be Sickel's partner, secure the letter, dropped the matter by saying to the registry clerk, "Well, then forward the letter to City Hotel, New Orleans."

This left Comstock in a pretty quandary. But he took the first train to Memphis, immediately got another warrant from the United States Commissioner there, made for the hotel supposed to be Sickel's stopping-place, and there found on the hotel register, in Sickel's handwriting, the name "S. Morris, Philadelphia." From the porter he learned that "Mr. Morris" had left Memphis early that morning on the Iron Mountain Railroad; for what place, the porter didn't know.

Keenly disappointed, Comstock tried to see his course through the puzzling situation. Should he add fourteen hundred miles more to his already long and baffling journey? He left the hotel, crossed to the city park, or

plaza, and, knowing not where to turn, prayed earnestly for guidance. As he walked aimlessly through the little park and reached the other side, almost the first thing that caught his eye was the ticket office of the Iron Mountain Railroad. It looked providential. Something seemed to say to him, "Go to New Orleans." Believing this to be a direct answer to prayer, he entered the station, found that a train connecting with the Iron Mountain road for New Orleans left about seven o'clock that night, and was told that there were first-class accommodations right through. He had just time to return to his hotel, get supper, and make the train.

Once started, instead of finding the promised "first-class accommodations" he was obliged to take a car attached to the end of a freight train. It was filled with coloured and white people, many of whom were smoking, and the air was nauseating. The night was cold, and so was the car. But the only way that the New England man could endure it was to put his arm under the bottom of his raised window, and thus make sure of a little fresh outside air. For six hours he stood this, and then, at nearly one o'clock in

the morning, he found that they had covered fourteen miles. Here he gladly left his car to make connections for New Orleans. The only place to wait was a country gin-mill, the connecting train was three hours late, and the Special Agent put in his time playing with a tame 'possum. Between four and five in the morning he crawled off to bed in the welcome sleeper, and the second morning after he was landed safely in New Orleans.

He now added to the collection of Sickel warrants that he had gathered in New Haven, Chicago, St. Louis, and Memphis, by securing his fifth one from the United States Commissioner in the New Orleans district; he found a deputy marshal to execute it; and then, going to the post-office, he repeated the registered letter plan that had failed in St. Louis. A carrier took to the City Hotel the notice for Sickel to call at the post-office.

And before noon of that day Comstock had his man. He took him before the United States Commissioner, arraigned him, produced the certified copies of the Connecticut indictment and bench warrant, and identified the prisoner as the defendant named therein. Sickel was held in default of bail to await the

order of the judge of that district to return him to the district of Connecticut from which he had fled. Thus did a Yankee boy celebrate Mardi Gras Day in New Orleans,—for that was the very day on which the wind-up occurred. But the real wind-up was not yet.

Anthony took a night train for New York, about as homesick a youngster as you would often see. In his office he found telegrams awaiting him from the marshal of the New Orleans district. It appeared that a writ of habeas corpus had been issued in the Louisiana state court, directing the marshal to bring the defendant before that court, notwithstanding the fact that a state court had no jurisdiction in matters pertaining to the federal courts. The United States marshal succeeded in getting these proceedings dismissed.

Then a second attempt was made by the state court to release the prisoner. Meantime, the United States Circuit Judge for that district was holding court in Texas, and the prisoner could not be removed from New Orleans except upon that judge's order. But the United States marshal was game. He secreted his prisoner, and before the second

process could issue in the state court he had his man placed on the outgoing steamer *Juniata* for Philadelphia via Havana, Cuba. Just as the steamer was about to sail, the required order for removal, signed by the United States judge, arrived. So far, so good.

It was learned afterward that a certain Hebrew society to which Morris Sickel belonged was determined that he should not be sent back to Connecticut, and it was said that a fund of five thousand dollars had been raised in his behalf to prevent this. These men now made vigorous plans to have their friend taken from the boat at Havana, by force if necessary, and released. They kept the cable between New Orleans and Havana busy, communicating with a Cuban branch of their organization,—$45 in gold being reported to have been spent in cable charges for one dispatch.

The deputy marshal in charge of Sickel learned of this plot. Taking his prisoner to his stateroom, he kept him there while the boat lay for several days in Havana harbour. One day, while still there, the captain and mate went ashore. The deputy saw a crowd

of men coming down the wharf. He promptly shackled and handcuffed Sickel, took a revolver in each hand, and quietly waited.

They didn't come. Sickel was pretty well frightened. Perhaps he managed to let word leak out to his friends on shore that they had better not come. That deputy took his duty too seriously for Sickel's comfort.

After the *Juniata* had left Havana for Philadelphia, the marshal at New Orleans sent word to Mr. Comstock that the large sum of money already mentioned had been raised in Sickel's behalf, that his friends were determined upon his release at Philadelphia, and would use force to accomplish it, and that Comstock must now protect the deputy.

That was enough for the Connecticut Civil War veteran. His fighting blood was up.

He sent to New Haven and secured another certified copy of the original indictment of Sickel, and a new bench warrant. Then he went to Philadelphia and obtained authority from the United States marshal there to execute this warrant in his district. Going to the agent of the steamship line, he got permission to board the vessel down the Delaware. With the Collector of the Port at Philadelphia

he made arrangements to be taken down the river on a revenue cutter. The Western Union Telegraph Company was given instructions to notify him the moment the *Juniata* should be sighted across the breakwater. Then he rested from his labours, awaiting developments at the Bingham House, from a Friday till Monday morning.

Upon word from the Western Union, Comstock hurried to the wharf, boarded the waiting revenue cutter, steamed down the Delaware, and reached the *Juniata* about ten miles from the city. As the revenue cutter reached the larger vessel's side, the deputy and his prisoner were watching, with interest, from the rail; and as Comstock clambered up the side of the *Juniata*, Sickel turned to the deputy and said with some intensity, "That's another one of Comstock's tricks."

As the *Juniata* swung into her dock at South Delaware Avenue, Philadelphia, Special Agent Comstock from New York and the United States deputy marshal from New Orleans, with their prisoner Morris Sickel, of Bridgeport, Montreal, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Memphis, and New Orleans, safely between them, having left the *Juniata* and

taken the rest of the trip on the revenue cutter, were making an undisturbed landing just across the river at Camden, New Jersey ; and the waiting thugs at the Philadelphia dock had a longer wait than they had expected.

Sickel was not brought into Philadelphia at all. His captors took him at once to New Haven, where Comstock and the deputy saw him safely jailed about eight o'clock that night. In jail he stayed until his trial, when he was convicted in the federal courts, and sent up for the full extent of the law : one year's imprisonment and five hundred dollars' fine.

That is the sort of endurance, patience, persistence, and keen resourcefulness that have made Anthony Comstock's life-work the challenge that it is to the traffic in debauchery.

X

WEAPONS THAT DID NOT PROSPER

WHEN you look squarely into the face of Anthony Comstock you look into a pair of light blue-gray eyes which in turn have many times looked full in the face of physical death and have not turned away. Worse than death they have faced, too; crippling and mutilation, attacks upon honour and the destroying of reputation; the human certainty of these rewards of his life-work has seemed many times to be inescapable. Yet through forty-one years of such attack and strain there has sounded in this man's heart the song of the promises of God, and chief among these has been God's word through Isaiah: *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah.*

There are assurances from Jesus Himself that have been his comfort and his guidance.

He is sure of a blessing when he reads: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." When his heart is heavy over the strife and bitterness in which his life, true to his calling, must be lived, he is comforted with his Lord's own word: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." It is worth while to see how God has honoured His Word in the safe-keeping of Anthony Comstock through incredible danger and heart-breaking trial. Many and cruel are the weapons that have been formed against him. But they have not prospered.

Sometimes the attacks upon him have been legal, sometimes journalistic, sometimes physical and criminal,—sometimes all three at once. The legal and journalistic were the most subtle and harassing, and elaborate plans for their success seem to have been made in the earlier days. For example, an English ex-convict was employed as press agent by the dealers in non-mailable matter of whom it was alleged that he made it his practice and business to prevent the news-

papers from making any favourable comment on Comstock and the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and that he saw to it that derogatory articles were published. While this was going on, Mr. Comstock was effectively taking advantage of the new laws that meant so much to the success of the Society's work.

Soon after that historic Sunday, March 2, 1873, when Congress had enacted the law for which the "hopeless" fight of faith had been made, a man at the head of a so-called medical institute was arrested, indicted, and convicted by Comstock for selling through the mails an infamous article. Of other men who were advertising criminal drugs and articles, some eighteen or twenty offenders either were in jail awaiting trial or had given bail to answer indictments of the Grand Jury in federal courts. Still others had been arrested in cities of New England and New York State and in Cleveland, Chicago, Indianapolis, and Des Moines.

Each arrest seemed to add to the fury of the wide-spread opposition to Comstock. A strategic move was made by the bringing of civil suits against him. In city after city

such suits were commenced, calculated to harass his operations and to intimidate him against further prosecution of the cases he had so vigorously begun. These suits were brought on the ground of alleged illegal arrest and malicious persecution. A Boston man began action against Mr. Comstock for $30,000; in New York the suits varied from $15,000 to $30,000; in Indianapolis were two of $20,000 and $25,000; in Des Moines an injured innocent sued for $10,000. It was an evident combination of the illicit dealers to frighten the anti-vice man off and embarrass his efforts in various places at the same time, so that both his time and his energy would be taken up in defending himself, and there would be no time to prosecute. Of course, special prominence was given to these hostile suits in the newspapers, and it was pointed out that Comstock was incapable of properly enforcing the law, and unfit for his position. All this prepared the way for the holding of a remarkable convention of "liberals," free-thinkers and free-lovers, in Philadelphia in 1876, at which fierce assaults were made upon Comstock.

We do not always recognize as clearly as

we ought that religious unbelief and immorality go hand in hand. There is no such thing as permanent purity in human life save through the presence of a recognized and obeyed God and Saviour. This truth was strikingly brought out through Mr. Comstock's experience, extending through some five years of time (from 1876 to 1881), with these infidels and freethinkers, who were organized under the title of "National Liberal League." This group of persons declared their abhorrence of obscenity in all its forms. Yet during this period of five years they laboured by malignant plot and misrepresentation to repeal the federal laws against obscene matters which had been enacted at the time of Mr. Comstock's memorable experience in Washington, and which the Liberals derisively called the "Comstock Laws."

Robert G. Ingersoll was first a member of the Executive Committee of this National Liberal League, and later for several years its vice-president. Not only did these persons deliberately and doggedly seek to do away with the obstructions which the United States government was putting in the path of

dealers in obscene literature and pictures, but they also petitioned Congress to abolish all "national or state fast days and festivals," "all forms of religious services sustained by government; especially the use of the Bible in the public schools"; they asked for "the dismissal of all chaplains in Army, Navy, Congress, Legislature, prisons, and other public institutions; and abrogation of all Sabbath laws"; and they insisted that the Constitution of the United States and of the individual states should be amended in order to conform with their demands.

Mr. Comstock fought these efforts for the repeal of the United States laws in the interests of public purity; and so members of the League fought Mr. Comstock. His own integrity of purpose and his good name were of course the object of malicious assault. Yet his good name is still good; and the attack that was rendered impotent by its inherent sin is practically unknown to the present generation.

Not only did these so-called "Liberals" seek to repeal purity laws, but, when certain dealers in obscene matters had been convicted and sentenced, they passed resolutions

of sympathy for the lawbreakers, petitioned the President for their pardon, and even attempted to organize a new political party because the President would not pardon one of the vice-presidents of the League who had been convicted for sending obscene matter through the mails. As Mr. Comstock himself has quaintly expressed it: "Infidelity and obscenity were duly wedded at Washington in March, 1878 (and R. G. Ingersoll was named by the Liberals as best man), and no man can henceforth put them asunder."

The facts in this startling five year episode in our national life have been brought together with great completeness and painstaking thoroughness by Mr. Comstock, and seem to be indisputable. Concerning it Joseph Cook wrote: "Of the many attempts made to repeal the federal laws against the distribution of infamous matter through the post-office, the most notable was the attempt of the so-called National Liberal League. . . . No one knows as well as Mr. Comstock the facts in this struggle, in which he took an active and victorious part from the beginning to its end."

And the Rev. A. C. Dixon, D. D., brought out with startling clearness the facts as to the union of atheism and immorality as he wrote on this same historical episode:

"It is interesting to trace the method by which modern infidelity obtains its basis of ethics. You will find it in a book by Van Buren Denslow. R. G. Ingersoll wrote an introduction to this book, in which he characterizes it as 'pure and shining coin,' and thinks that such books herald the coming of better days. 'The moral law, tell the truth,' says Mr. Denslow, 'is the weapon whereby the strong rule the weak. The opposing maxim, 'Tell a lie,' is the weapon of the weak and the helpless against brute force. Nature endows almost every animal with the faculty of deceit in order to aid it in escaping from the brute force of its superiors. Why then should not man be endowed with the faculty of lying, when it is to his interest to appear wise concerning matters of which he is ignorant? . . .

"'Thou shalt not steal,' continued Mr. Denslow, 'is a moral precept invented by the strong, the matured, the successful, and by them impressed upon the weak, the infantile

and the failures in life's struggle, as all criminals are. . . . Universal society might be pictured, for the illustration of this feature of the moral code, as consisting of two sets of swine, one of which is in the clover, and the other is out. The swine that are in the clover grunt, "Thou shalt not steal, put up the bars." The swine that are out of the clover grunt, "Did you make the clover? let down the bars." "Thou shalt not steal" is a maxim impressed by property owners upon non-property owners. . . .'

"Mr. Denslow gives us the basis of chastity in the following words: 'So the laws forbidding unchastity were framed by those who, in the earlier periods of civilization, could afford to own women for the protection of their property rights in them against the poor who could not. . . . Chastity begins, therefore, as an element in the law of the strong for the government of the weak concerning property.'

"It is to be expected," continues Dr. Dixon, "that men who endorse such an immoral code should not hesitate to champion the vendors of obscene literature, or do anything else by which their self-interest might

be served. The infidelity of to-day is weak, because it asserts that it cannot know God. Agnosticism is really infidelity with a fool's cap on. It has given up the battle and stands before the world as an ignoramus in all matters that pertain to God. It is wicked, as proved by this ethical code of its advocates. In its best form it is moral deformity covered with mental finery. It is a poisonous vine, with gaudy flowers, whose odour is death. It is a vampire bat which sucks the life blood from its victim, while it fans him with the wings of melodious words. It is Epicureanism after it has been rotting for 2,000 years. . . .

"The world needs to know the dark conspiracies which these men formed for the purpose of repealing most wholesome laws, thereby opening the way for flooding our schools and homes with moral filth."

The civil suits against the young Agent of the Society for the Suppression of Vice all failed except one, in which judgment was rendered against him for six cents. A counter suit was brought against the plaintiff and a like judgment was secured in Comstock's favour. It was a case of quits. Abusive

and threatening anonymous letters were an accompaniment of those days, and even worse messengers of evil. One envelope addressed to Mr. Comstock lacked sufficient postage, and a clerk went to the post-office to pay the needed postage due. He had suspiciously smelled of the package as he returned; then laid it on Mr. Comstock's desk. The latter opened it, and found an infected porous plaster, which, as he handled it, gave him, as he describes it, a peculiar *boring* sensation in the pores of his hand and face. At once he had his skin and his office disinfected. He escaped serious trouble; the assistant was attacked by a blood-poisoning and was ill for a year.

At his home Mr. Comstock one day received by mail a collection of smallpox scabs, labelled as such, with a hearty message from the sender expressing the hope that they would do their full work. Mr. Comstock and his wife were at once vaccinated, and escaped. He had had smallpox as a boy.

Still another time, as Mr. Comstock was standing in the store of the American Tract Society at 150 Nassau Street, New York, a messenger came in and handed him a small

pasteboard box. He received it innocently, and opened it, only later learning its contents. It was what is pleasantly known as an infernal machine. A sixteen-ounce bottle of rifle powder lay in the bottom of the box, beside it a bottle of sulphuric acid, and between and around them plenty of closely-packed broken glass. This was all well compacted together, and over it lay a partition of wood, glued down. On top of the wood was a lever, eight or nine inches long, revolving on a screw through its centre. On one end of the lever was a piece of emery, on the other end an elastic band, fastened to a screw turned into the wooden partition. At the end of the box, where the emery-end of the lever came, was a block of wood punctured with holes in which were thrust half a dozen match ends, and in the centre of these, through a hole in the block, was a "quick match," or fuse, communicating with the powder beneath. Such a fuse, when confined, burns with lightning-like rapidity. The igniting of any one of the match ends would ignite the fuse, the entire machine would blow up, and Anthony Comstock would be filled with broken glass, while the

sulphuric acid would complete the job. The box was so set, of course, that the opening of the lid would release the lever, which would send the emery sharply across the match ends.

That was the plan. The little box was one of the weapons that was intended to prosper. God had other plans. The inventors of the machine had, in their eagerness to make a sure thing of it, drawn the elastic band so taut that while the messenger was carrying the box to Mr. Comstock the lever had been slowly drawn under a bit of wood; and when the lid was removed the strength of the elastic was exhausted, and there wasn't enough force left to ignite a match. As Mr. Comstock opened the box there was a click; everybody jumped; and that was all.

"The wrath of man," says Mr. Comstock, "shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

While the free-thinkers were deciding to repeal the Comstock law, still other haters of this man who was putting them to confusion kept trying to repeal his life; yet both the law and the life were in God's keeping, and were not to be repealed until He said so. We

don't always remember that at the time, however. It took a persistent faith and a sturdy courage to carry the young New Englander through those dark days.

The first time Mr. Comstock ever carried a revolver was when the criminal saloon-keeper Chapman, whose Brooklyn dive Comstock closed up, was threatening his life. He did it then on the advice of the Chief of Police and the District Attorney; and he has carried one ever since. In the enforcement of the law, and dealing with desperate criminals as he constantly does, he believes it is his duty to trust in God and keep his powder dry. He acts on the conviction that we ought to put ourselves in the way of answering our own prayers if we can.

The case against Chapman's dive was pressed, the license was revoked, and the place was closed up. Chapman's gang of cock-fighters let it be known that they were going to burn Comstock's house and run him out of the place. His neighbours did not dare to be seen walking with him on the street. But Chapman, not Comstock, was the one to leave.

There was a big Irish ex-prize-fighter,

standing six feet three, named Sullivan, who kept an obscene-book store in Nassau Street. Mr. Comstock had him arrested. Out on bail, he lay in wait one day as Comstock came from Judge Benedict's Federal Court in Chambers Street, near the City Hall, and was crossing the park on the way to his office. Mr. Comstock's hands were full of exhibits, and Sullivan struck out at him from the shoulder, viciously. The young New Englander dodged, dropped the exhibits, and his fist somehow landed just between the eyes of the ex-prize-fighter, whose head dropped helplessly back. Before he could recover, Comstock sprang at him, caught him by the throat, forced him backwards over one of the chains that keep people off the grass, throttled him with one hand while with the other he kept the crowd off, and waited for the arrival of a hastening policeman. Then Sullivan was put into safe-keeping on the Island for assault, and later was convicted on the original charge.

In more than one instance Mr. Comstock's alertness of mind and promptness of action have served both to protect him from injury of person or reputation, and to turn the tables

on his enemies. He once trailed a "green goods" fellow to New Jersey, and took the man into custody. After the criminal had been secured he was very anxious to get Mr. Comstock to shift the nippers from the man's right hand to his left hand. Mr. Comstock had declined to do so, however, and he found later that there was a razor in the man's pocket which would have been very useful could he have gotten a free hand at it. Again, when Comstock was escorting a man under arrest on a railroad train, in Pennsylvania, and the man offered him $1,600 then and there for his freedom, the anti-vice secretary simply called a brakeman and had him count the money, as a valuable witness to what had just occurred! The man was subsequently convicted and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for bribery, and two years for the original offense. This was somewhat like the time when Mr. Comstock learned that two men, one of whom was under indictment, were coming to his house for an interview with him. When they were together these men also tried to see what the influence of a bribe would accomplish. But Mr. Comstock had two other men on hand,

concealed, and just called them in at the right moment to have everything quite orderly and shipshape in recording what had occurred.

On another occasion a man whom Comstock had caught committing an infamous felony, and who was under arrest, came up behind his prosecutor on a stairway in the court-house and spit in his face; as Comstock turned, the criminal broke his cane over Comstock's head. And then he promptly dropped the cane and himself dropped unexpectedly into a corner, while Mr. Comstock stood over him until an officer could take charge and lock him up. He was sent up later for two years, and Mr. Comstock believes it was he who, after serving his time, sent the infernal machine.

This criminal was one of the ringleaders in a conspiracy to put their enemy permanently out of the way. Mr. Comstock found an anonymous letter in his pew in church saying that he was to be killed, and about the same time came another letter confirming this, with the further information that a certain man who "hung out" in Oxley's saloon, in Sixth Avenue, New York, was plotting the

thing. Mr. Comstock later discovered that the letter had been sent to him by the police officer whom he had had dismissed from the force because of "tipping off" dealer Simpson, one of the early arrests. The ex-policeman was now in the employ of this criminal gang, and he said he would do anything against Comstock, but "he'd be ——— if he'd stand for murder."

After his warning and information, Mr. Comstock sent a man to Oxley's saloon to trace the thing out. This man talked excitedly and threateningly against Comstock in the assassin's presence, and managed to get acquainted. He then talked about putting up a job to get Comstock impeached as a witness in court. The thug's suspicions were disarmed, and he took the decoy into his confidence, explaining that there was no use in trying to impeach their man in court, for he had too many friends, but that they were planning to sand-bag him to death as he came out of church on a Sunday night. The sand-bagging, done with an eel-skin filled with sand, would leave no external mark, but would kill by producing congestion of the brain. An inquest would find death by apo-

plexy, and no murder charge would be made.

Those were days when the young Brooklyn husband and father never knew, as he bade good-bye to his wife and little girl in the morning, whether he would ever see them again. It was a time of awful strain and suspense. But the comforting assurance of God's promise concerning the weapons raised against him was mighty; and he was stayed in his faith and courage. He was careful, after the full report on the murder plot, not to let any stranger walk near him to or from church. But the plotters finally discovered that the "decoy" was Mr. Comstock's man, and the plot never materialized.

Back in 1868, when young Comstock, then a clerk in a New York dry-goods house, had caused the arrest of a man named Conroy for selling obscene books to the other clerks in that house, he had made a bitter enemy, but he had not quenched the desire of the man for that sort of traffic. In 1874 Conroy was found to be using the mails for his old business, operating in sixteen different post-offices under eighteen aliases. He would send out his circulars from one district, re-

ceive his reply-mail in another, and fill the orders from a third, thus safeguarding himself pretty well. But Mr. Comstock secured a warrant from the United States Commissioner for Conroy under the alias N. F. Kirke, at Newark, N. J., for an offense committed there, and the warrant was placed in Comstock's hands for execution. He captured Conroy late one Saturday night as he came to the Newark post-office for his mail, and took him before the Commissioner. Conroy was arraigned and committed to jail for a further hearing. There being no United States deputy marshal at hand, Mr. Comstock was deputed by the Commissioner to take his man to the Newark jail. This was done in a closed carriage.

On the way the prisoner pleaded in the most pitiable and abject way for his release. When the jail was reached, the two men prepared to alight, and Comstock was just reaching for the door of the carriage when Conroy seized his hand and struck him in the head with the blade of a pocket-knife, cutting through his hat and making a slight scalp wound. As Comstock still sought to get the door open, the man lunged desperately again

with his knife, and this time with better effect, as he tore Comstock's face open and slashed through four facial arteries. The wounded man then sprang out and his prisoner followed, only to be covered instantly by the revolver that plucky Anthony had whipped from his pocket with one hand as he tried to compress the wound and stop the flow of blood with the other. In this condition he marched his prisoner into the jail, turned him over to the warden, asked for the address of a reliable surgeon, and drove there on the jump.

"Good-evening, doctor; I've got a job for you," was his quiet greeting.

"Well, I should think you had," answered the surgeon.

The wound was hastily dressed and closed with sticking plaster, and Mr. Comstock, accompanied by a post-office clerk who fortunately was with him, drove to the depot and was soon on a train to New York. Taking carriage again to Brooklyn, he stopped at the house of his loved pastor, the Rev. William Ives Buddington, in order that he might accompany him to his home and break the news to Mrs. Comstock. Mr. Buddington

was away; but Mrs. Buddington took his place and preceded Mr. Comstock to his home. There she told the anxious wife that there had been an accident, but that there was no occasion to worry. Shortly afterward Mr. Comstock arrived, to find awaiting him a very brave little woman who, with a very white face, took his arm and helped him upstairs.

The physician and pastor were soon at his bedside, the severed arteries were picked up and tied, the wound once more dressed, and about midnight they left Anthony Comstock, fighter, as comfortably off as a man could be under the circumstances. Two weeks later he was in Philadelphia attending a United States court and prosecuting several cases. He carries a long, deep scar to this day on that left cheek.

The weapons raised against him have not prospered. God is good; His word stands inviolate.

XI

BEFRIENDING THE CRIMINAL

THE best and hardest fighters in any right cause seem to be those in whom the loving and tender side of their nature is most prominently developed. Anthony Comstock is a striking example of this principle. He is a "home body," through and through, loving his home and his dear ones with a deep tenderness. His love for children is a passion in his life; it is they, indeed, for whom he has laid down his life in his crusade of eternal vigilance against the crimes whose objective is to ruin childhood. And he has learned, in the school of sorrow, the pathway to love and tenderness. His first-born and only child, a daughter, was born in the summer of 1871. The following year he was in the thick of his early experiences of desperate conflict with the doers of evil. In June of 1872 the baby daughter was taken ill. One morning, June 28th, Mr.

Comstock left his home for court, while a trained nurse shared with the mother the care of the child. Mr. Comstock was conducting the prosecution, and was on the witness stand all day, under a bitter and cudgelling cross-examination. At night he returned to his home, to find the little girl dead. The entry in his diary for that day reads: "The Lord's will be done. Oh, for grace to say it and live it!"

That was on a Friday. The court adjourned until Monday, when Mr. Comstock went on to the stand again, while in the meantime he and the heart-broken mother had buried their child.

So his love for children is not "academic" or in the abstract; it has a basis that nothing can ever take from him. A friend of the writer's, Mr. Frederick Hall of Dundee, Illinois, whose sketches of the child life of the Bible have put readers under heavy obligation, recently had an interesting experience with Mr. Comstock on this side of his nature. He writes about it as follows:

I called at his office and introduced myself to his stenographer as an acquaintance of yours. It was twenty minutes before he came

in, and then he was just from a legal battle, and with his mind full of two other pressing cases. Twice he interrupted our brief conversation to speak to an assistant about them, and I could not but know that I had chosen an inopportune time to break in upon him. Yet he was courteous, determinedly so, and made me stay when I quite insisted upon leaving.

The impression he made upon me was of a man of dominating, dictatorial, fighting spirit, but resolutely subduing his harshnesses, because he recognized his limitations and fought himself as fiercely as he fought any other adversary. A man, moreover, to whom religion was a very real thing. A man who would have fought well in Cromwell's Ironsides, singing hymns as he marched to battle.

But now mark how my impression of him was enlarged:

I chanced to show him the pictures of my little girls (moved doubtless by the same paternal pride which prompted me to exhibit them to you) and instantly, with bewildering suddenness, at sight of their little faces all the storm and stress of which he was the centre seemed to fall away. For a moment he studied the pictures delightedly; then impulsively drew out his note-book, handed me a little snapshot of himself, told me the circumstances under which it had been taken, and added: "When you get home, give that to your little girls, and tell them it is 'Uncle Tony.'"

These are the Citizens for Whom "Uncle Tony" Has Lived and "Died Daily" for More Than Forty Years, and to Whom His Heart Goes Out.

At home I wrote him a brief note, which Grace and Muriel signed, telling him that two little girls in Illinois thanked their "Uncle Tony" for the picture he had sent. With that I supposed the incident closed; but in about ten days there came to them a letter (two closely typewritten pages) and a half-dozen coloured post-cards, which this harassed and busy man had taken the time to send them. By way of acknowledgment Muriel sent him at Christmas time a little pin ball, of her own making, and a letter. A few days later there came to them another letter and a large and excellent photograph which hangs now, framed, in "the play corner." They know it only as "Uncle Tony," and that he is a friend and protector to all little children; but when they are older I shall tell them more about him and teach them to associate with that picture the lines of Bayard Taylor:

> "The bravest are the tenderest,
> The loving are the daring."

Just think, I was in his presence less than twenty minutes!

The natural friendliness that exists between Mr. Comstock and children once served him in good stead in locating a criminal in Canada.

In the later eighties, a complaint was re-

ceived from Michigan that a person in a town in Canada was sending obscene pictures to Michigan and neighbouring localities. Mr. Comstock made an investigation from a Michigan post-office,—doing this in view of his knowledge of the practice of such criminal traffickers. For example, if a boys' or girls' seminary is being invaded with objectionable printed matter sent directly by the one who has this matter for sale, in order to be successful in catching the criminal such correspondence as may be used to secure evidence must come from the same post-office as that of the seminary, or in its near vicinity. Suspicion would at once be aroused if inquiries for the printed matter came from a remote quarter.

After securing complete evidence in the Michigan case, Mr. Comstock corresponded with the Commissioner of Police at Ottawa, Canada, and arranged for a meeting with himself and a lieutenant of police at Toronto. Together the three men then went on to the smaller town to make the arrest.

Of course the criminal was not using his own name in conducting his mail order business. Mr. Comstock tried to secure infor-

mation about him at the post-office, and failed; he was not known there.

Dropping into a stationery store, Comstock found a bright boy acting as clerk, and began looking over his stock of cancelled stamps which he had for sale. Stamp collecting is a hobby of Mr. Comstock's.

He bought some stamps from the boy, and then told him he was from the United States, a stranger, and had been corresponding with a man living in that town whose name and address were not known at the post-office; did the boy know him, and could he tell Mr. Comstock of his whereabouts.

The boy, who was a gentlemanly young fellow, said he did know the man, and offered to show the stranger where he lived. Together they went to a hotel, and the boy introduced his new American friend to the dealer in vice, who had his office at his hotel room. He had formerly been a mill worker; now he was making photographs of an atrocious character.

After the boy had left them, Mr. Comstock introduced himself to the stranger by showing him some correspondence that they had had together concerning the man's stock in

trade. The dealer willingly showed his caller more of his stock, and said that he had new specimens that he would be glad to show. The American made some selections from among them, and then asked the dealer if he would object to walking with him to another hotel where Comstock had left his satchel. The Police Commissioner and lieutenant were waiting there, and quietly arrested the dealer with his illicit goods in hand.

Of course the criminal, together with some others, criticized the boy who had helped in the arrest of a fellow townsman. It so happened, however, that the boy had been quite unaware of Mr. Comstock's mission, and had simply offered to do a courteous act for a stranger. Even had he been fully aware of Mr. Comstock's purpose, he might have been quite beyond criticism had he helped in putting a stop to the criminal trade of one whom he knew.

After reaching home Mr. Comstock did a characteristic thing in sending his young Canadian friend some stamps from his own collection. In 1908, about twenty years later, Comstock received a letter of greetings and remembrance from the Canadian boy, then a

married man with a family of children, and occupying an official position of honour and responsibility in his native town. He was sending Mr. Comstock a set of the Quebec Commemoration stamps, which went into the Secretary's valuable collection, and are prized highly. But the remembrance of that boy is what Mr. Comstock prizes most. It was typical of the brighter things that occasionally come into the strenuous life of this vice fighter.

Mr. Comstock's love is not limited to children nor to his friends. It flows out freely and unrestrictedly to his enemies and the very persons whom he must prosecute. And the nature of his work makes many enemies. Since 1872 he has brought to trial 2,713 cases, and of these about one and a half per cent. have been acquitted: the remaining ninety-eight and a half per cent. were convicted. That means that many a malefactor has breathed threatenings and determined revenge against this man; and, as has been shown, some of these have not been idle threats. Yet this has not embittered him; he lives in such complete dependence upon God that the love which God is has domi-

nant place in his life, and determines his attitude towards all alike.

One of his rock-bottom principles is that every one with whom he deals shall get the full benefit of all his legal rights. The first thing he does after arresting a man is to tell him that anything he now says may be used against him, and that he need say nothing if he does not wish to ; that he has the privilege of retaining counsel ; and that his prosecutor, Comstock, will see that his every legal right is defended. And this explosive, aggressive, intolerant, tender-hearted fighter keeps his word, so much so that lawyers and courts and even many criminals know that it is so and respect him for it. "I tell you, Charles," he said to the writer one day, pounding the table with his massive fist as he spoke, "I wouldn't any more be guilty of depriving a man of his legal rights than I'd put my hand in his pocket and take his pocketbook." What a different place our courts of justice would be if all lawyers held to this simple principle of honour !

During the first four years after 1872 a large number of very notorious characters were convicted by Comstock, and in many

instances they were sentenced to the full extent of the law. Plots to put this new "troubler of Israel" out of the way were real and dangerous. Among the criminals thus imprisoned was a mal-practitioner who also sent infamous stuff through the mails, and who, on Comstock's prosecution, went to King's County penitentiary for two years, and served his time. Warnings were brought to Mr. Comstock's office repeatedly that as soon as this man came out he was going to "do Comstock up." More than once the Agent of the Anti-Vice Society was obliged to go to the City Hall police headquarters for special officers to accompany him in order to safeguard him against just such men as they lay in wait for him near the entrance of his own office building.

One morning, shortly after the release of the mal-practitioner, whose name was Whitehead, Mr. Comstock read in the paper that he had been arrested on a new charge and was committed, pending bail and trial, to the Raymond Street Jail in Brooklyn. And a little later that very morning, in Brooklyn, Mr. Comstock saw the man coming towards him on Fulton Street. He had furnished bail

and was at liberty. The two men caught sight of each other about the same instant.

"I'm in for it now," thought Anthony to himself, as he quietly walked forward; then "Good-morning," he said courteously to his enemy as they were passing each other.

"Can I speak to you a minute?" demanded Whitehead. His face was livid; he seemed labouring under intense nervous excitement.

"Certainly," answered Comstock; and he slid his hand into his forward trousers pocket, resting it on the revolver which was there. To his surprise Whitehead spoke out abruptly:

"Comstock, I'm in trouble, and you're the only man that can get me out of it."

"You know I can't take your word and go into court on the strength of that," Mr. Comstock responded; "but if you will give me the facts and it is possible for me to verify them, you shall have the benefit of it."

Whitehead then continued: "I got to thinking about you last night in jail. You sent me up; but you caught me square. I've said hard things about you; and I want you to forgive me, and help me out of my trouble."

Then he told his story. It was a long one, and involved details that need not be gone into here. But what interested Mr. Comstock was the fact that, in discussing the complaint now made against himself, Whitehead made statements that corroborated the complaint *in every detail except one;* on that one the question of his real guilt turned, and he denied it absolutely. The sweeping admission of nine-tenths of the prosecution thus voluntarily made by the man under suspicion was such that Mr. Comstock, if he had been tricky, could have gone to the District Attorney then and there and laid the matter before him; and there would have been no escape for Whitehead. But Comstock's enemy had appealed to him for help; and Mr. Comstock believes that there ought to be a great difference between the professional criminal and the professing Christian. He assured the man of all the assistance he could give him, and they parted.

The person bringing the present complaint against Whitehead was a woman, then detained in the House of Detention in New York. Mr. Comstock went to an address in Brooklyn where she had temporarily roomed.

He ascertained from her landlady that this woman had been in her rooms on a certain night when, if her complaint was true, she would have had to be in New York; and that a man, evidently an accomplice, had called at the Brooklyn address that evening. Then he went to the House of Detention and interviewed the woman herself. At first she told the same story that she had sworn to before the court. Mr. Comstock, having ascertained that she was a Roman Catholic, asked her if she would dare to go to her father confessor and perjure her soul by repeating her statement at the confessional. He also asked her about the man who had called at the Brooklyn address the night that she claimed to be in New York.

By this time the woman, doubtless fearing that her questioner knew more than he really did, broke down, admitted that the whole accusation against Whitehead was false, and told facts that showed just how it had been worked out.

It had been the result of a deep-laid plot by a man who had been convicted of a crime and sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment, and who suspected Whitehead of being

responsible for his exposure and arrest. This man, in prison, had put a former partner of his (a friend of the Brooklyn woman's) up to the job of incriminating Whitehead.

Mr. Comstock now had the facts, and brought them to the attention of the Brooklyn District Attorney. He laid them before the grand jury, and the guilty man was indicted. The matter was kept secret, a bench warrant was issued for the arrest, and was given to Comstock to serve. The man was located in Rochester, was traced to Wyoming, New York, where he was operating a medical office, and there was arrested by Mr. Comstock, made a confession, and accompanied his captor back to Brooklyn.

They had to travel at night, on a sleeper; and Mr. Comstock put his man comfortably to bed, slipped a pair of handcuffs on his *ankles*, and said he would see him in the morning. "I guess you will," agreed the man.

The prisoner pleaded guilty to the indictment and was sentenced to imprisonment. And Anthony Comstock's sworn enemy, Whitehead, went free, because of this tireless labour in his behalf by his former prosecutor.

It is this sort of rigid insistence upon justice to criminals and honest men alike that, during almost forty years of public practice, has won for Mr. Comstock the unstinted respect and admiration of the men who know how rare the quality is. No matter how bitter the opposing counsel may be, nor how hostile the defendant, Mr. Comstock has faithfully striven never to allow in himself any feeling of resentment,—especially towards the man under his arrest. He aims to treat such a man as fairly as though he were acting as his counsel instead of his prosecutor, so far as securing to him his legal rights is concerned.

A Bowery dealer in pictures and frames once fell into Mr. Comstock's hands because he was selling certain pictures of foreign manufacture that were objectionable. He was held for trial. The man's daughter, an eighteen-year-old girl, came to Mr. Comstock's office in great distress, and said that a lawyer wanted two hundred and fifty dollars before he would take up her father's case in court. Mr. Comstock had learned, subsequent to the man's arrest, that he had not been long in the United States, and that, having seen similar pictures freely exposed for

sale in his own country, he had sold them here in ignorance of the law, and of course he now promised never to handle them again. The minimum penalty for his offense was a fifty dollar fine or ten days; the maximum, one year and five hundred dollars.

To the distressed daughter Mr. Comstock said: "Your father will probably not be willing to take my advice; but if he does, I will see that all his legal rights are presented before the court. He does *not* require a lawyer: that is money thrown away. The thing for him to do is simply to go into court, plead guilty to having had these things to sell, and I will present the facts in the case to the court."

Fortunately, the foreigner took this good but unusual advice from the prosecution. Mr. Comstock called the court's attention to the facts constituting the crime with which the man was charged; then he called attention to the fact that the man was a foreigner, had been here only a short time, claimed ignorance of the law, and supposed he had the same right to sell the pictures that he had in his own country. The court imposed a fine of seventy-five dollars.

If this man's case had been taken by the lawyer who wanted it, and the counsel had attempted to earn his fee by taking up the time of the court in fighting the case, the defendant would in all probability have been heavily fined and imprisoned.

While it is not Mr. Comstock's place to withhold any fact that goes to establish the guilt of the accused, and while he does not appear in any sense on behalf of the defendant or as his counsel, yet he does seek to present to the court everything that it is proper for the court to know in favour of the defendant. He believes, as he has every reason to, that it is his holding to this principle that has in great measure allayed the savage opposition which for so many years he had to meet with in his work of prosecuting criminals.

He aims never to act until he has absolute knowledge of the guilt of the accused and can prove it by *legal* evidence—often so different from moral evidence.

Having established a man's guilt, which it is his duty to do, he then insists that all the facts must go to the court, whether the defendant is convicted after trial or pleads

guilty. He is equally insistent that all the facts in the defendant's favour are presented to the court whether or not the defendant has counsel, and whether or not he throws himself on the mercy of the court. Yet even then he often sees defendants sacrificed by their own counsel. Many an unscrupulous lawyer demands the heaviest fee he can hope to get, then goes into court, and, in order to deceive his client or to satisfy him that he is earning his fee, makes a show of abusing the witnesses and misrepresents the facts to the court. The client's interests are sacrificed, time is wasted, and a severer penalty is incurred than if the truth had been told or the client had pleaded guilty.

A recent case in Philadelphia illustrates this. A picture dealer had sold offensive pictures to a representative of the Society, and Mr. Comstock had found quantities of the pictures in his possession at the time of making the arrest. After conferring with the guilty man's counsel, Mr. Comstock suggested that he plead guilty, in which case the prosecutor would be content with a fine. The counsel at first agreed to this. But a minister of the defendant's church who was

in touch with the man strenuously objected, on the ground that to plead guilty would bring reproach on the defendant's name. "Any more so," asked Mr. Comstock, "than to deny it and then be convicted by twelve men?" But trial was insisted upon; the jury did not leave their seats to render their verdict of "Guilty"; and the man went to prison for two months instead of being fined.

Two men in New York were charged in the federal courts with violating the postal laws; they were indicted by the grand jury, and their cases were set for trial. The counsel in each case conferred with Mr. Comstock; in each case they were shown that the evidence for conviction was absolute, and they were advised to plead guilty and then show whatever mitigating circumstances could be advanced. The counsel for one of the two men took Mr. Comstock's advice, pleaded guilty, and his client was fined five hundred dollars. The other fought the case before a jury: his man went to prison for a year and paid the five hundred dollars fine as well. The charge in both cases was identically the same.

The representatives of law and order do not always work *with* the Secretary of the Society for the Suppression of Vice in his efforts to safeguard the public. He once arrested a man in New York City, brought him before a magistrate, presented the necessary evidence, and the magistrate held the man for trial. Upon trial the man was convicted, but sentence was suspended by the court in order to give him an opportunity to find the person who sold him the objectionable pictures that had led to his arrest.

The morning following the suspension of sentence the convicted man came to Mr. Comstock's office and told him he would show him the person he was after. It was arranged between them that a hundred pictures should be purchased from the "higher up" dealer, in Comstock's presence. This was done. The wholesaler was then arrested, and was brought before the same magistrate who had held the first man for trial.

After fresh evidence had been presented, and the facts clearly established, the magistrate discharged the wholesaler! Not only so, but in doing this the magistrate passed the pictures around to the reporters and

others to look at, and declared that there was "nothing wrong with them." And this in face of the fact that the Special Sessions Court had convicted the other man, condemning the pictures as unlawful.

Mr. Comstock was, of course, for the time being helpless. Later he made charges against this magistrate, and the man was dismissed from the bench.

Many of the best lawyers have now come to understand that when Mr. Comstock says a thing is so, it is so; and that when he recommends a certain course of action for the man that he is prosecuting, he does it because he has nothing but that one's interest at heart. In the early days this was not understood, and there would be fierce legal battles whenever he got into court, and attempts to belittle this man who was sacrificing his life and reputation for others. But those days have largely passed. Out of the old storm of opposition Mr. Comstock's God-empowered adherence to the principles of justice, honour, and love has forced even his enemies to respect him, and has won a wide admiration from bench and bar. Neither lawyers nor physicians, as a rule, will accept

any fees from him when he has need of their services, because of their recognition of his unique place as a public benefactor.

There was an ex-pugilist who had taken up the practice of law and was at the zenith of his success at the time that young Comstock began his work. He was a man of high standing, and it was often said of him that his word was as good as his bond. He and Comstock had a number of encounters in the courts, and, as Anthony said to him in later years, "You used to rub my ears pretty hard when we first met." This lawyer was very faithful to his clients' interests, and would invariably make a strong fight for them. But as the years went on and he learned Comstock's ways and character, he got into the habit of coming to the prosecutor, and saying, "I appear for so-and-so, whom you've arrested. Have you got a case against him?"

"Yes," Comstock would answer, "and I'll show you what the facts are."

Frequently the reply would be: "All I want to know is that you tell me you've got a case; if you have, I know there's no use fighting; there's nothing left for me but to waive

examination before the magistrate, go into court and plead guilty, and make the best terms I can for my client."

Of course, one result of thus putting Mr. Comstock on his honour was that, if there was any technical point in favour of the defendant, he was in honour bound to tell the lawyer; and he did. To-day there are many lawyers who treat the "puritanical" prosecutor's cases in much the same manner as did the ex-pugilist; they have learned that he will not lie to them or trick them. To a lawyer who is thus going to plead guilty for his client Comstock will often say: "Now I want you to know the exact facts; for if you make any misstatement in court I shall have to get up and correct it, and that will prejudice your client." So scrupulously does he administer justice.

Mr. Comstock recently had a touching experience in the course of his routine work. The Post-Office Department had referred a matter to him which necessitated his arresting a woman who had sent some infamous matter through the mails. With the woman at the time of her arrest was her twelve-year-old little daughter. After making the arrest,

Mr. Comstock told the mother of her legal rights; and she responded by telling him something of the character and history of the man who had made the complaint against her. These facts made a very decided change in the aspect of the case. Mr. Comstock assured the woman that he would see that justice and only justice was done, and was about to leave the house when the little girl came up to him, rested her head confidingly on his breast, and cried as though her heart would break. "Bertha," said the man who loves and is living for children, "please trust me in this matter, and do not worry any more about Mamma." Smiling at him through her tears, the child reached up and kissed him, saying as she did so, "I will trust you."

He told the mother later that no stronger argument could be made for her than that little girl had already made; and also that, if the facts were as reported to him, the man who made the complaint would get very little satisfaction in the court of justice when the matter came up for final settlement.

The case later came before the federal court, the facts were faithfully presented, and the woman pleaded guilty. A fine of one

dollar was imposed. Shortly after, Mr. Comstock received a letter from her, in which she expressed her shame and sorrow for so far forgetting herself as to have repeated loathsome matters told to her; and she thanked her "prosecutor" out of a full heart for the "square deal" that had been given her by the man her little girl had seen fit to trust.

"I tell you," said Mr. Comstock as he wrote of this incident, "it is a comfort and delight to mete out even-handed justice, even though one is dealing with a violator of the law. There are such things as accidental criminals as well as professionals, and happy is the man who can make the distinction."

XII

"PERSECUTING" THE ART STUDENTS' LEAGUE

MR. COMSTOCK has sometimes been accused of pestering and persecuting innocent persons in his persistent campaign against vice. One of the most widely advertised instances of this sort in recent years was the case of the Art Students' League in New York City. It is worth getting at the facts to see whether the charge of persecution holds.

Mr. Comstock received a copy of a pamphlet that was being sent out to advertise the work of the Art Students' League, its purpose being to induce young men and women to join the League upon payment of the annual dues. This pamphlet contained drawings, made by amateurs, of nude figures, particularly offensive. The pamphlets were being sent out indiscriminately and by the thousands, apparently to people of all sorts whether known to be lovers of art or not.

It was a plain violation of the postal laws, and Mr. Comstock sent one of his assistants

to the office of the League,—for two purposes : to secure copies of the pamphlet, and to try to locate some responsible man officially connected with the League. It was necessary to secure evidence in the form of the pamphlet directly from the office of the League, that a search warrant might be secured, with authority to seize the objectionable matter.

Failing to locate any man who could be held responsible, a young woman who was distributing the pamphlets, and even giving them away free of charge to any one who happened to call for them, was placed under arrest, the search warrant was executed, and the objectionable matter was seized.

A preliminary hearing was held before a city magistrate. At this hearing a number of men, so-called members of the League, were present. In open court Mr. Comstock called for any who were responsible for the employment of the young woman, and for the distribution of the pamphlets, to come forward and take the place of the defendant at the bar, thus properly assuming the responsibility for the acts of their employee. No one appeared. Comstock then turned directly to the alleged members of the League

who were present, and asked them—"brave men hiding behind this young woman's skirts," he said later—to come to the front and take her place. Not a man responded. Mr. Comstock received private information, however, that they were "going to lick him when he got out of court." But he found these men, he says, no braver outside the court room than they were inside.

Newspaper attacks, however, were resorted to, and a vigorous effort was made to belittle the Secretary of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. It was evidently hoped that by ridicule the proper administration of the law and the condemnation of the objectionable pamphlets could be prevented. There was no relenting on the part of the prosecution, however, and a little later the managers of the League authorized the destruction of the printed matter that had been seized, without even awaiting the trial of the young woman who had been arrested.

In such cases as this the law requires the District Attorney, upon the conviction of the defendant in whose possession unlawful matters have been found, to destroy all such matters as have been seized. The only ob-

ject of the Suppression of Vice Society in this instance was to prevent the further dissemination of the objectionable pamphlet. As soon as they were destroyed by order of the District Attorney, therefore, Comstock wrote that official and asked that further proceedings against the young woman be dismissed, that no odium of conviction might be attached to her. This was done.

It is evident that the arrest of the young woman clerk was proper as being the only course open to the Society in the administration of the law against a public menace. That she should have been the scapegoat of the Society was regrettable. But could Mr. Comstock's action be classed as "persecution"?

In December of that year, however, an effort was made to have Comstock removed from his office of Post-Office Inspector. When he learned of this attempt, Mr. Comstock went on to Washington in person to see Mr. Cortelyou, then Postmaster-General. Mr. Cortelyou was sitting at his official desk when Mr. Comstock's name was brought in by an attendant. Instead of sending for his caller, the Postmaster-General arose from his

desk, walked out to the reception-room, and took Mr. Comstock heartily by the hand. Walking back together to the private office they talked the matter over, and Mr. Cortelyou said:

"Mr. Comstock, I have never had a thought of not reappointing you. But you're a veteran, and I have a right to appoint you under the Civil Service rule. I am going so to appoint you, and now I am going to give you a salary whether you want one or not." Mr. Comstock had, it will be recalled, served since March 5, 1873, as an officer of the Federal Government without pay, this having been done at his own request. It is a question whether any other man living has any such record. At Mr. Cortelyou's insistence he now consented to receive a salary from the government, the first that he had ever taken. And the newspapers published the statement that the Postmaster-General had refused to reappoint Mr. Comstock!

The vindicated lover of purity has said quaintly, in comment on this experience:

"You fellows who are sowing seed don't know what the rays of the sun are on the back of the weeder."

XIII

CAREFULNESS, AND A CONSCIENCE

PERHAPS no one would ordinarily think of Mr. Comstock as being of a scholarly temperament. Yet he meets to an unusual degree the qualifications suggested in a remarkable definition of that temperament that is given in Appleton's Encyclopædia of American Biography: "That rare combination of profound insight, sustained attention, microscopic accuracy, iron tenacity, and disinterested pursuit of truth, which characterizes the great scientific discoverer or the great historian." Neither scientist nor historian, Mr. Comstock has made history, and is still making it, by the habitual application of these qualities. And the incalculable gain of them comes out constantly, and in unexpected ways.

For example, he has on file to-day, jacketed and classified, the evidence in every one of the cases he ever arrested. The evidence is full and detailed; and Mr. Comstock says

dryly, as he refers to them and thinks of the many attempts that have been made to discredit him publicly, "Come on with your civil suits against me!" Men used to try to charge him with making false arrests. They don't do it now; the attempts were discouraging.

A bit of old evidence, coupled with Comstock's good memory, is sometimes a boon to a needy sufferer. Some years ago a man who had grown weary of the privilege of supporting his wife decided to repudiate her and shift the burden. Her counsel brought suit against him for non-support. The husband denied her wifehood, or even any knowledge of her. But it was learned that Comstock had once arrested the man, and he was subpœnaed to appear before the referee. Before going into court Mr. Comstock examined the records that he had made at the time of arrest, as filed in his office, and he took them with him.

As they waited for the court to open he saw his former prisoner standing near by, and spoke to him, calling him by name. "You don't know me," said the man; "you never saw me before."

"I *do* know you," said Mr. Comstock. "On ——— date [about five years before] I arrested you down in Wall Street, and you came to my office to beg me not to prosecute you. *You brought with you and introduced to me your bride, who is this woman here in court;* and you wanted me to let up on you for your wife's sake, as you said you had just been married."

Then Mr. Comstock gave the facts under oath, on the witness stand, and the wife won her case.

At another time the detailed accuracy and scrupulous honesty of records and practice showed forth strongly when the case of a United States marshal was involved. Following the conviction of Morris Sickel in the United States Court in New Haven, Connecticut, Comstock had been summoned as a witness to attend the federal court in that district. Engagements in New York courts just then prevented his attendance. Some days afterward he received a witness-fee roll to be signed, as a witness before the Connecticut court which he had not attended. His suspicions being aroused, he went to Washington and examined the marshal's re-

turns. Here he found that many of the pay-rolls for witness-fees which, on other occasions, Comstock had signed, had been altered after they had been signed, the amount of money called for being increased beyond the actual amount that Comstock, as a witness, had received. The practice had been, in a number of cases, first to fill out the amount of witness-fee in pencil; after the witness had signed for his fee, the number of miles travelled would be increased, or the number of days in attendance upon court, then the additional money thus called for would be added to the claim, the forged document sent to Washington, and the government would pay the claim. The marshal pocketed the excess.

Now it had been Mr. Comstock's practice for years to keep an accurate and detailed account of all moneys received by him, from whatever source. In order to safeguard and preserve his own strict integrity as a witness, and to prevent counsel for the defendants using the fact that Comstock was drawing a witness-fee as an opportunity to impeach his motives and prejudice him before a jury, as was constantly attempted by the opposition,

he has made it his invariable practice to turn over to the Society for the Suppression of Vice all the fees that he receives. They have amounted, during his service, to more than $22,000. These fees he turns in to the treasury of the Society at the end of each month, in a monthly statement rendered to the treasurer. And not only witness-fees, but every cent from other sources, whether it be from the use of the office telephone by an outsider, or the sale of old metal or paper stock that has been destroyed, is carefully recorded, item by item, and paid over to the treasurer. The "microscopic accuracy and iron tenacity" hold here as in the hunting down of crime.

So Anthony Comstock had merely to turn from the United States marshal's pay-rolls to his own daily cash account, as kept by him during all those years, to know the exact amount of money that he as witness had received while serving in the Connecticut federal court. He found that nearly every item which he had received from the marshal had been tampered with, and increased to an amount beyond that which he had received.

When he preferred charges against the

marshal, he found that the man was backed by strong political influence. The night before the hearing, Mr. Comstock was summoned to the house of the District Attorney at Stamford, Connecticut, and an effort was made to induce him to partake freely of wine, which the teetotaler declined. The following day, the District Attorney appeared, presumably as the representative of the United States Government, but actually, as the examination developed, in the rôle of counsel for the accused marshal. The local papers pitched into Comstock with the habitual zeal, and a strong effort was made to turn public sentiment against him by flagrant misrepresentations. The marshal was indeed a political power in the state.

The court made a report favourable to the marshal. After the newspapers had had their say, Mr. Comstock went to Washington and called on the Secretary of the Treasury. "Have you seen the report of Judge ——— in this matter?" he was asked. No, Mr. Comstock had not seen it, but he said he would like to. The Secretary sent a messenger for it, and Mr. Comstock read it through.

"What have you to say?" asked the Secretary of the Treasury.

"Nothing at present," was the answer. "What I have to say I will say in writing, under my oath," added Mr. Comstock.

He went back to New York and prepared a statement of facts, giving the list of witness-fees that he had received. He pointed out that the amounts that *he* had received were entered in the sheets in pencil, and that *these pencil entries as first made could still be seen on the sheets;* that the amounts drawn by the marshal were overlaid in ink, but that the pencil amounts corroborated Comstock's personal accounts. He also stated that he had called the judge's attention to these facts.

This report of Mr. Comstock's was received in Washington on a Friday or Saturday. On Monday a successor to the United States marshal was nominated to the Senate by President Grant, and the politically influential marshal stepped down and out. There are times when it does not take the United States Government long to act. Homer Byington, who for many years was editor of the Norwalk (Conn.) *Gazette*, and

who was at the time the Washington correspondent of the New York *Tribune* and other papers, remarked that he would rather have the Devil get after him than young Comstock. Certain it is that "young Comstock" has been used of the Lord to make fruitless a great deal of the Devil's energy.

In little matters Mr. Comstock's quiet carefulness has sometimes been of unexpected usefulness to others. At the time of the World's Fair in Chicago he was in a sleeping car, and, after the people were up in the morning, he heard a man saying excitedly: "This nigger stole my wife's watch. She left it in her sacque, on the pillow; the porter came and made up the bunk, and the watch is gone. He's got it!"

"May I see the sacque?" asked Mr. Comstock.

It was handed to him; he smoothed it out over his knee, felt of it carefully, and then said reassuringly, "Why, the watch is here." It had been concealed in the lining of the sacque. "That's one of the cases where I am sorry I got the property back," said Mr. Comstock afterward with a grimace of disgust as he told of this incident, "for the man

hadn't the decency to apologize to the porter."

North America is not large enough to limit Anthony Comstock's labours. His work, in its scrupulous accuracy and relentless tenacity, reaches across the ocean into foreign lands. As a United States Post-Office Inspector he is charged with the enforcement of Postal and Interstate Commerce laws against the transmission of obscene matters. The laws in the two branches are almost identical, the one referring to mail transmission, the other, to that by common carriers between states. He makes it his business to watch carefully the advertisements in every paper that he sees. Whenever he finds a foreign advertisement dealing in books and pictures, he sends for circulars or price-lists. If the advertisement is under a fictitious name,—as the criminal ones invariably are, —Mr. Comstock pursues the same tactics that are employed in discovering criminals operating through the mails in this country. He sends an order, in compliance with their printed advertisement or circulars, and is able to produce the kind of matter which they send in reply to correspondence. This

enables the foreign government to trace the correspondence to the guilty person and identify him, whether the name used was fictitious or not.

Mr. Comstock's next step is to report the matter to the Postmaster-General of the United States and recommend that the matter be referred to the Secretary of State, and that he in turn be requested to instruct our United States minister—at the foreign city of the person complained of—to call the attention of the foreign government to the operations of this person, especially where he is violating our interstate and postal laws. Mr. Comstock also recommends that the matter be sent to the Secretary of the Treasury, with the request that the Collectors of the Ports be instructed to give their special attention to any matters coming into the country from the person named, or from wherever his name and address appear. Still further, he asks for an order directing the Postmasters of all Ports of Entry or otherwise who may find sealed packages or letters bearing the return card ("if not delivered, etc., return to") of the foreign dealer to send all such matters to the Customs officials of the Port,

notifying the person addressed to call there and open the package in the presence of the Customs official, and, if it contains non-mailable matter, to see that it goes to the Dead Letter Office.

In addition to all these steps, the Postmaster of the Post-Office at which the periodical that contains the advertisement of the dealer is mailed is notified not to forward the periodical if the advertisement appears; and the publisher of the periodical is notified that the advertisement is non-mailable and that his paper will not be carried until the advertising is discontinued. And Mr. Comstock gets a fraud order against the publisher prohibiting the sending of any money order or registered letter to him on the ground that he is violating the law by using a fictitious address for illegal purposes.

Such are the detailed steps, care, and labour involved in protecting American character against the poison of a single European dealer No easy-going or slipshod methods would avail. In one case a Paris dealer advertised in some of our Western newspapers "art pictures" and "classical literature," of a vile sort. Mr. Comstock's attention was

called to it. He investigated, made his reports, and the matter was placed in the hands of the United States minister at Paris. Shortly afterward Mr. Comstock's attention was called to the advertising of similar matter from Barcelona, Spain. He investigated, and found that the material had a familiar look. The handwriting disclosed the fact that it was the Paris dealer, who had transferred his business to Spain. He was duly reported, and driven out of Barcelona. When, after a considerable interval, Mr. Comstock had occasion to investigate a new name in Paris, he found the same man for the third time, who was working from another Paris address. The matter sent, and the handwriting, established his identity. He was at once followed up, driven out, and was again traced to Poszony, Austria.

A man who easily tired out would not work well as Secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.

The getting of mail-order evidence in this country is an interesting and painstaking operation. It must be done both with scrupulous honour and with rigid attention to the obligations of the law. A case prosecuted by

Mr. Comstock was once carried by the defendant, by appeal after conviction, to the Supreme Court of the United States. The Supreme Court settled the question of the law in the matter, and formally approved of the methods that Mr. Comstock has always employed for detecting crimes in the Post-Office Department.

Many people have the mistaken idea that crimes against the Post-Office Department are detected by the authorities' opening of sealed letters when there is reason to suspect that the law is being violated. Such a thing is never done, and would not be tolerated for a moment. There is no tampering in any way with sealed matter sent under first-class postage, while in transit in the mails.

To illustrate how rigidly the inviolability of the seal is respected, imagine such an extreme case as the following. Suppose Mr. Comstock were standing in the lobby of a post-office and saw a man wrap up and seal and affix stamps to a package of the most obscene books or pictures. Indeed, suppose he should send a dozen different packages of this sort to a dozen different boys, and the contents of each was plainly seen as it was

wrapped, addressed, stamped, and mailed. The man, having deposited his packages, goes out. There is no power in the government to intercept those packages, open them, or tamper with them in any way. There are just two things that can be legally done.

A search warrant may be issued, by the Federal Court, to seize those packages and take them from the post-office; but of this action Mr. Comstock has, in almost forty years' service, never known a single instance. The only other legal method is the usual one. An inspector, such as Mr. Comstock is, may have the objectionable package properly postmarked, then enclosed, under cover of an official envelope, and addressed to the post-office of delivery, with instructions to the postmaster there to make prompt delivery of the package to the person addressed and ask this recipient to allow the postmaster to return the package unopened to the Post-Office Inspector (Comstock) to be used as evidence in a court of justice. It is customary, in such cases, to send an order with the Inspector's letter to the postmaster, addressed to the Inspector, to be signed by the addressee, directing the postmaster to

return the package to the Inspector, and authorizing the latter to "receive, open, and use same in the interests of justice." If the recipient should decline to return the package until after it was opened, then he would have to be subpœnaed as a witness to identify the objectionable matter, putting the government to considerable expense. If he should decline wholly to return the package, either unopened or opened, a subpœna may be issued for him to produce the wrapping and its contents. But Inspector Comstock has never had a case in all his experience where the recipient refused to do as asked, for the urgency of the matter is made so plain in the Inspector's first communication.

Of course the case imagined, of the Inspector's witnessing the mailing of objectionable matter, was wholly hypothetical, and would probably never occur. But the sending of an Inspector's order to the recipient of non-mailable matter is of frequent occurrence. The occasion for it occurs in a variety of ways, as when a person complains of a criminal dealer, and Mr. Comstock asks the complainant to send for some of his goods in order to get evidence. An order

requesting the sending of the unopened package to the Inspector will then go to the complainant. When certain "green-goods" men, at one time, were mailing their stuff to lists of 10,000 people at a time, the order plan was used with one or two recipients.

Thus is safeguarded the sanctity of the seal of all matters entrusted to our government. Mr. Comstock has not known, in his lifetime experience, of a single instance of a government representative breaking a seal of suspected non-mailable matter.

XIV

HUMOURS OF THE WORK

THOUGH much of Anthony Comstock's work is of a stern and repellent and often tragic character, bringing him, as it does, into the depths of human infamy, the wreckage of lives, and the savage opposition of defeated crime, nevertheless it is occasionally lightened by touches of humour that he looks back upon with a smile.

Fortunately for him, his name and life purpose are more widely known than his face. This fact enables him to work the more effectively, and it sometimes occasions unexpected situations.

Riding one day years ago with an assistant on a Fourth Avenue horse-car through Center Street, in New York City, Mr. Comstock saw a street peddler reach under his push-cart, take out a book, look furtively in every direction, and then offer it to a young fellow who had stopped to look at the peddler's wares. "We'll get off here, George,"

said Mr. Comstock, and they walked back to the push-cart and looked over the stuff.

"Boss, buy a suppressed book?" volunteered the peddler to the newcomers.

"I guess you haven't any."

"Oh, yes, I have; if old Comstock knew I had this book he'd give me ten years."

"It must be an expurgated edition."

"I'll show you." And the peddler proved that he was speaking the truth.

"I'll take this," said Mr. Comstock, thrusting the book into his pocket. "But why do you charge double the regular price?"

"I *have* to, it's such a risk. If Comstock caught me selling such a book he'd send me up to the Island."

The Secretary of the Society for the Suppression of Vice paid no money for his copy of the book. It was not necessary to do so in order to complete the legal evidence, for the man had met the conditions of the Penal Code, in that he had "had for sale, and offered for sale," the criminal goods.

"George," said he instead, "push this cart over to the Tombs Court."

At the Tombs they left the cart and its contents with the sergeant of the Court

Squad, took the prisoner up-stairs before the court, made a formal complaint, and had him committed to the Tombs for trial. Returning to the sergeant's room they heard a man exclaiming, as they entered, "I demand my property."

"What property?" asked Mr. Comstock. "Are you the owner of this push-cart and its contents?"

"Yes, I am," was the reply, "and the man who had the cart was working on a commission for me."

"Come up-stairs with me," invited Mr. Comstock; and up-stairs the process of commitment was repeated. Both men were finally convicted, sentenced and imprisoned.

The vice-suppressor had investigated a dealer who was exploiting obscene things from Amsterdam, Holland, and put a stop to his business. Before Comstock received word, however, of the official action of our minister abroad he had received a letter from the criminal dealer himself, sent to the address that Comstock had used in securing the necessary mail evidence against the man (Mr. Comstock's own name, of course, not

having appeared in the matter), and informing Mr. Comstock very confidentially that the government had gotten after him (the dealer) for selling these things, and that he had therefore transferred his business to Budapest, Hungary, where he would now be very glad to supply his correspondent with anything further in the same line that might be desired. Grateful for the dealer's coöperation in the work of the suppression of vice, Mr. Comstock immediately made a fresh report in the matter, the authorities in Hungary got after the man from Amsterdam, and a second time he was put out of business.

In company with a deputy marshal in Cleveland, Ohio, Mr. Comstock was looking up a man who was illegally operating through the mails.

They found the office, and Mr. Comstock, leaving the deputy marshal outside in the hallway, stepped in and introduced himself to the dealer by showing the correspondence he had had with him through the mail. The man, of course, did not know to whom he was talking, except that his visitor was evidently a customer, with whom he had already

had negotiations. His acknowledgment of the correspondence as his own also served as legal evidence to identify him as the sender of the unlawful matter.

He talked freely with Mr. Comstock, and told him frankly that there was big money in this business, but that one had to be on the lookout against a special agent named Comstock. "He came mighty near nabbing me over in Detroit," he ran on, "but I got a tip from one of the clerks in the Post-Office, and got away into Canada. There's just *one* man too smart for Comstock,—but you've got to be mighty careful." Mr. Comstock pushed open the hall door and called in the deputy marshal. "Here's the man you've got your warrant for," he said to the deputy. A conviction followed.

What this extra careful criminal had said about the Detroit experience was quite true. Mr. Comstock had had a warrant for him in that place, and the man had slipped away. He was one man too smart for Comstock—in Detroit.

A complaint once came to the Suppression of Vice Society against a barber who had a

shop near Girard College, Philadelphia. He was selling obscene pictures, and was supposed to be corrupting the boys of the college.

Having business in Philadelphia, Mr. Comstock went out to the neighbourhood of the college early one morning, about breakfast time, armed with some tooth-picks which he used freely as though having just come from a near-by boarding-house. He got a clean shave, said nothing about any pictures, took from his pocket-book the noticeably good-sized roll of bills with which he had provided himself, and handed the barber a five-dollar note in payment for the shave. The barber was quick to size up a good customer, and wanted to know if his new patron would not like to buy some pictures. "It depends on what they are," was the reply; "I never buy a pig in a bag."

The barber brought out his stock in trade; his customer purchased his evidence and went away.

The pictures were of such a character that Mr. Comstock was anxious to locate the photographer who had made them. He delayed making any arrest until he had had an opportunity of visiting the barber's place

two or three times, during different visits to Philadelphia, always making a point of getting a shave or a shine when there. During one of these visits Mr. Comstock told the barber that he would like to be introduced to the photographer of the pictures, so that he could make arrangements with him for large lots. (Mr. Comstock was quite sincere; he secured these large lots from the photographer a little later.)

Going to the photographer's place on Chestnut Street, Mr. Comstock secured the necessary evidence of his illegal traffic, and then took out warrants for the arrest of both men. He returned to the barber shop first, accompanied by a police officer in plain clothes whom he introduced to the barber, saying he would like to have his friend see the pictures. The barber was very sorry, but explained that he had had a social time at his own house the night before, having the pictures there with him, and had not yet brought them back to his shop. So the arrest was made without further formality.

As the three men rode down-town together in a street-car, Mr. Comstock sat opposite the officer and his prisoner.

"Who is that old fellow?" asked the barber of the plain clothes man.

"Don't you know him?" was the reply. "That's Comstock, of New York."

"What! *That* duffer Comstock? I've been shaving him for weeks. Wouldn't I have cut his throat if I'd known it!"

Another barber enlivened the monotony of Mr. Comstock's work at Poughkeepsie, New York. This man was an assistant in a barber shop, and he was secretly selling about sixteen varieties of vile pictures. Having been shaved there, Comstock was shown the pictures, procured the evidence, and then asked the man if he would introduce him to the fellow who made the pictures. "Sure," was the answer, "there's to be a ball at ——— tonight; and if you'll come around I'll see that you meet him."

Mr. Comstock attended the ball, had a talk with the photographer, and secured evidence against him. While talking with the photographer and the barber, a former acquaintance of the New York man happened by and called out pleasantly, "Hello, Comstock, how are you?"

The barber was so frightened that he started down the stairs on the jump, and almost slid the whole flight. That ball was spoiled for him. The next morning Mr. Comstock with a police officer called at the barber's shop, leaving the officer outside. The proprietor was on hand, and Mr. Comstock chose him for his morning shave. Before getting into his chair Comstock burst out laughing.

"I've got a big joke to tell you," he exclaimed. "I was around at the ball last night, and this fellow here," pointing to the assistant, who was still nervous, "was talking with me, when a fellow came along and called me 'Comstock.' This young fellow thought I was Comstock of New York, and he got so scared that he 'most slid down a whole flight of stairs."

"Yes, sir," broke in the assistant barber; "I ran home and burned up all my pictures. But the boss here's got a fine lot of them upstairs."

"May I see them?" asked the man who still lacked his shave.

The boss barber willingly got out his stock; Mr. Comstock called in the waiting

police officer; both barbers were arrested; and the trio, including the photographer, were convicted.

A very complete case had been made out against the seller of a lottery policy. Mr. Comstock had the policy that had been written and sold, and he had the manifold copy-book in which the seller had recorded the bet. There was practically no defense; but the defendant's counsel was doing the best he could for his client.

Having put one of Mr. Comstock's witnesses on the stand the defense proceeded to cross-question him. The lawyer was what is sometimes called a "physical lawyer," who tries by brute force to intimidate the witness. In this instance he had gotten hold of certain information that promised to work disastrously against Comstock. The lawyer began, "May it please the court, I have but two or three questions to ask of this witness. I shall not occupy much of the time of the court. Now, Mr. Witness, will you please keep your voice up, sir, so that the furthest juryman can hear, and will you inform the jury where you resided before you came to New York."

"In Omaha, Nebraska."

Repeating his assurance that he would not detain the court long, the lawyer continued, "Will you now inform the gentlemen of the jury if it is not a fact that a part of the time you were in Omaha you were in the penitentiary."

"Yes, sir," replied the witness soberly.

"How long were you in the penitentiary?"

"Three years."

The lawyer's satisfaction was very evident. He told the court he had but one more question to ask of the witness. "Will you please inform the court and the gentlemen of the jury what you were there for?" And the witness quietly replied,

"Chief Warden."

It was too much for the court, the jury, and the spectators. After a moment, the Recorder leaned over his desk and in a quiet tone asked the counsel for the defense if he desired to address the jury. The lawyer swallowed hard, and said he had nothing further to say; he would "submit the matter on your honour's charge." The defendant was found guilty.

XV

THE SUMMIT BURGLARIES

WHILE Mr. Comstock does not profess to be a detective, he has had to absorb some fundamental principles of successful detective work in his long drawn out conflict with professional criminals. He was once pressed into detective service in an unexpected way.

Mr. Comstock's home is in Summit, New Jersey; he commutes between there and his New York office. There had been fifteen or twenty burglaries in Summit within a few weeks' time. The place was getting terrorized. One day the president of the Town Council came to Comstock's home, and asked him if he wouldn't help the authorities to put an end to the plundering of citizens that was going on; would he capture the burglars for them?

"I'm not a thief catcher," laughed Mr. Comstock.

"But you've had a large experience in dealing with crime, and you understand what is necessary in preparing legal evidence. We need your help."

As a matter of friendliness and community service Mr. Comstock was perfectly ready to do what he could, upon one or two conditions. He must be given official authority to act in whatever way might prove necessary, and his connection with the matter must be kept a secret. He might also have to run the risk of a civil suit in what he did; and he must be protected in this. "The city will stand back of you; go ahead and use your own judgment," was the reply of the Town Council's president.

A day or two later a vestryman of the Episcopal Church at Summit called at Mr. Comstock's New York office, and said that the church had been burglarized. Asked whether there was any one on whom suspicion fell, or whether any clues of any sort had been discovered, the vestryman had nothing to offer. But he thought that it would be well for Mr. Comstock to come to the church that night and look over the premises.

At the church Comstock found an unusual

sort of marks where the breaking-in had been done,—marks just the reverse made by an ordinary "jimmy." The indentations were on the door, rather than on the door casing where a jimmy blade goes in. Inside the church it was found that the "Poor-Box" had been bored open, and rifled of its money. The boring had been done by a five-eighths inch bit that was evidently worn out, as the under lip of the bit did not cut the wood, but made only a faint indentation. It was noticed also that matches had been struck and thrown away, a common practice of thieves for lighting purposes. The amateur detective picked up some of these matches, put them in an envelope, and stuck it in his pocket, though he was laughed at for so doing. Then he went home without the slightest hint from any one as to who the guilty individuals might be.

Within a few days the same vestryman called on Mr. Comstock again and said that the rectory had been broken into. The rector and his wife were away from home in the South, and the house had been closed for some time. Again there was no suspicion or clue pointing to any one; again Mr. Com-

stock promised to call and investigate. The sexton had the keys of the rectory.

After supper that evening the two men and the sexton started their examinations. At the window and door which had been broken in the same peculiar jimmy marks were found. In chiffonier and bureau drawers were holes made by the same worn-out five-eighths inch bit. And strewn around on the floor were the same kind of burnt matches as had lighted up the church. What had been taken was a more difficult problem to those who were strangers to the contents of the house. But here dust marks were the clue. For example, it was evident that a clock and ornament were gone from the parlour mantel. Absences of articles from the sideboard in the dining-room, and from bureaus, wash-stands, and mantels in the sleeping rooms were similarly inferred. The sideboard drawers had been forced open, and silver and possibly table linen had been taken. Mr. Comstock found a solitary teaspoon which he slipped into his pocket.

He gave strict orders that no one be permitted to enter the house without his permission, that the doors and windows be kept

locked, and that no one should even know that he had been there. As they were discussing this, the door-bell rang. A neighbour who had formerly lived next door to Mr. Comstock, but whose house was now on a street adjoining the rectory,—just around the corner, so that the yards of the two houses came together,—was interested to know what progress they were making. And he wanted to report that the servant girl in their home had just come to him, rather white in the face, and had said, "Comstock's in there."

It occurred to Mr. Comstock that it was not likely that the girl could have known that he was there unless, seeing a light in the rectory, she had come through the fence between the two yards, peered through the shutter slats and recognized him. He took his neighbour aside,—a Mr. Howe,—and asked him to go quietly home and not to say that he had seen Mr. Comstock, but to talk with the girl. Then he promised to come up from the city the following day at noon-time, and see what Mr. Howe had learned. He urged against doing anything to arouse the girl's suspicion.

A well-known New York architect, Mr. J. Cleveland Cady, was another friend and neighbour of Mr. Comstock's at Summit, and the next day it seemed better to meet Mr. Howe at Mr. Cady's house. Almost the first word Mr. Howe had to give was: "Lily's going to leave. She's had a letter from her husband, telling her he's going West as the advance agent of an opera troupe, and she's going with him."

It looked as though Lily, the Howes' servant, was frightened; and Mr. Comstock made up his mind that she was lying about the letter. He went to the Summit post-office and ascertained, as Post-Office Inspector, that she had not received any letter. He was also quite sure that Lily's husband would not be found in the neighbourhood of Summit again unless her fears were substantially allayed.

"I'm coming around to-night to see your children," Mr. Comstock told neighbour Howe; and that evening after dinner he was ushered into the Howes' home, firm in belief that the girl would be listening at the kitchen door for all that he might say. As the Howe children and Mr. Comstock were old friends

he had a jolly time with them for a while, and then the conversation drifted around to the burglary, and Mr. Comstock, speaking quite clearly, told of a recent experience of his own.

The Sunday previous a felonious assault had been made on a young woman on the streets of Summit. Believing that the criminal was one of a gang of tramps who had been camping near Chatham, in the vicinity of Summit, Mr. Comstock, prompt to act in any such emergency, had called for volunteers from a crowd loafing around the railroad station to accompany him to that camp of tramps, and see what they could do to round up the man who was wanted. These volunteers were to have met Mr. Comstock at a place agreed upon. Before the time of meeting, however, he had received information that the man he was after was in hiding in a little house opposite the Roman Catholic Church. Going there, Comstock secured the evidence necessary to corroborate his information, and arrested his man, who later got ten years for his crime.

But the volunteers who were to have helped Mr. Comstock, getting tired of wait-

ing for him, went into a saloon, filled up with liquor, and broke open a railroad switch, for which the railroad detectives got on their trail, and four of them fled the town. One of these four Mr. Comstock knew well enough to describe accurately. He was a livery hack driver. The other three Comstock did not know and could not describe. One, however, was known to be an ex-convict, who had slept nights in the barn of a Mr. Bonnell whose horse and carriage had been stolen.

As Mr. Comstock was ostensibly telling the Howe family about his experience, while in reality he was talking to a pair of ears concealed behind the kitchen door, he told about the four men who had fled the town, asking Mr. Howe if he had ever seen men of a certain description, which he proceeded to give. He described Johnny Hunter, the hack driver, and then he gave a fictitious description of three other men. He enlarged upon the fact that as these were poor men, and had had to flee the town, they would have to get money to go with; and as Johnny Hunter was a hack driver, he naturally knew that the rector and his wife were away, and that the house was closed: and as the ex-convict

had been sleeping in Bonnell's barn, it was an easy matter for that ex-convict to break into the barn and get the horse and carriage, to carry away the plunder that was stolen from the rectory. Thus the story went for the benefit of the listening ears behind the kitchen door. It was hoped that it would allay her fears.

As Mr. Comstock rose to go, he asked, "Did any of you hear any noise the night that the rectory was robbed?"

"No," answered Mr. Howe; "but our girl saw a light in the rectory, and she told us later that she thought it was the servants going to bed."

The girl probably knew that there were no servants in the closed house; and Mr. Comstock asked if he might see her for a moment and have a word with her, as perhaps she could give him some points to work on. Mr. Howe started to see if she was in, and Mr. Comstock imagined that he heard somebody getting away from the other side of that door.

In a moment Lily came in, flushed and excited. Stepping directly in front of where Mr. Comstock was sitting, she looked straight

at him and wanted to know if she could ask him a question. "Certainly," he replied.

"Do you think that the same people who stole Bonnell's horse and carriage robbed the rectory?"

"I do," answered Mr. Comstock.

Then the look of anxiety left the girl's face, and in a confiding manner she went on, "I can give you a point. My husband came up on a ten o'clock train from New York that very night, and I went down to the station to meet him. As we were passing the rectory I saw four men standing talking."

"Could you see them well enough to describe them?" asked Mr. Comstock.

"Oh, yes; they were standing right under the lamp-post."

Then the girl gave a glib description of the four men whom Mr. Comstock had just been describing to the Howe family; Johnny Hunter, and his three imaginary companions.

While Mr. Comstock was unhitching his horse in front of Mr. Howe's house that evening, about to drive home, he asked his host to keep watch for Lily's husband, whose name was Reston, and let Comstock know as soon as the man might get to town. He was

confident that the girl would communicate with her husband now, and that he would soon return. Again he urged upon Mr. Howe the importance of doing nothing to arouse the girl's suspicion.

This was on a Friday night. Sunday morning at breakfast time the Comstock door-bell rang, and Mr. Howe reported that Reston was on hand. He had come up on a newspaper train, and had been talking with his wife in the Howes' back yard at six o'clock that morning. He had now gone over to Cisco's house,—a place about a mile out from the town in a little dell at the junction of two roads, and near another house occupied by Cisco's son-in-law.

Mr. Comstock sent for his coachman, told him to dress as a tramp, get a rig from the livery stable, drive to Chatham, and come around on the turnpike so as to approach Cisco's house from the west,—the opposite side from the direction of Summit. Mr. Comstock then called in his friend Mr. Cady, and the two of them walked cross lots, through the woods. By the time the tramp in the livery rig neared Cisco's house, Comstock and Cady were stretched out behind a stone

wall from which they could see both houses, —the father's and son-in-law's, who was named Swayne. The two houses were about a quarter of a mile apart, and the men behind the stone wall were at a safe distance from both.

The coachman visited Swayne's house, and then, when he could join Mr. Comstock without suspicion, he reported to him that he had found a man there, though he did not know who it was.

Comstock left Mr. Cady and his coachman, and made a call on the Swayne house himself.

"Is Mr. Reston here?" he asked pleasantly of the woman who answered his knock.

"No, we don't have anything to do with him," was the curt reply.

The caller assured the woman that no offense was meant. He went on to say that he had seen Mr. Reston's wife the night before last, and that she had told of passing four men in front of the rectory, and now Mr. Comstock wanted to see Reston to talk with him about it, as that was the night the rectory had been robbed. Evidently mollified, the woman answered, "If that's what you

want, you'll find him over to Joel's house (meaning Joel Cisco) on the turnpike."

As he approached Joel Cisco's home, Mr. Comstock saw a man with his hat and coat off, walking nervously up and down before the house. Turning in suddenly from the pike, Comstock walked straight up to him, and asked if Mr. Cisco was at home.

"No; he's gone to Short Hills."

"Is this Mr. Reston?"

Thrown off his guard the man answered that it was. Comstock slapped him on the shoulder and said, "You're my prisoner; where's your hat and coat?"

It so happened that Mr. Cady had recently had his chicken roost robbed several times of handsome Buff Cochin fowls. As Mr. Comstock and his prisoner went together into Cisco's house, Comstock noticed on passing through the kitchen that the family had just dined, and the generous sized bones on the plate seemed to fit Buff Cochins. There were also a handsome ebony handled steel, with pearl handled silver knifes and forks, on the kitchen table.

Passing through the kitchen to a front bedroom in the small two-story house, Mr. Com-

stock noticed that the top drawer of a combination bureau and wash-stand was fitted with a Yale lock. As Reston was getting his hat and coat Mrs. Cisco came in.

"What's the matter?" she exclaimed.

"I'm arrested for burglary," Reston answered.

The woman appeared very much horrified. When Mr. Comstock asked her to unlock the top drawer of the bureau, she did so without hesitation. Almost the first thing the amateur detective's eye rested on was a five-eighths inch bit, almost worn out. Taking this, Mr. Comstock went through the drawer, and found only plated silverware, and things that would be classed as "chuck."

As the two men left the house together, Comstock turned, about to take his prisoner's right hand firmly in his own left by a method which would have secured him, when, quick as a flash, the man dropped to the ground, rolled over, was on his feet again, and started over a rail fence across the fields to a swamp, his would-be captor in hot pursuit after him.

As they ran Mr. Comstock called to the man to halt; this served to speed up the sprint nicely. Then Comstock shouted, "If you

don't stop, I'll shoot." The fugitive looked around, and kept on running.

In his varied experience in making more than thirty-six hundred arrests, Mr. Comstock has never, except on that Sunday, fired in the direction of a man. He fired two shots that day, taking care not to hit. The second shot was fired just as the man plunged into the swamp. Anthony plunged in after him, Sunday trousers and all, and succeeded in making close connections.

The two men walked together back to the corner where Swayne's cottage was. Here they met Joel Cisco coming from the direction of Short Hills in a brand new G. A. R. suit. Cisco let them pass without comment, but they were halted by Swayne, a burly fellow who demanded of Comstock what he was doing with that man, disgracing all his people.

"He's under arrest," said Mr. Comstock, "and is taking a walk with me over to the village."

"How do you know he's going?"

"I know he is, as he is in my custody," was the answer, and Comstock conspicuously shifted his revolver from his hip to his coat

pocket. At that moment Mr. Cady and the coachman appeared, and Swayne subsided.

Cady and the coachman drove towards the village, and Comstock and his prisoner walked behind. After they had gone about half-way, Reston put his hand over his heart and began to pant.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Comstock.

"Heart failure," was the answer.

"You had better sit down here, then," pointing to a rock beside the road. It looked as though the man was speaking the truth. As they sat there together Mr. Comstock improved his opportunity by taking a memorandum book and pencil from his pocket, saying to Reston, "Mr. Butterworth is a friend of mine, and I am very desirous of securing a list of what you've taken."

"I didn't break in; Jack Angus broke in."

"Well, you helped carry the stuff out, and you know what you took."

Supposing that his questioner knew he had been in the rectory, Reston gave a list of items filling nearly two pages of the notebook. It was found that the men had taken Bonnell's horse and carriage, and had carried

away the plunder in it. The stolen goods had been sold to a Goldstein in New York. The horse and carriage had been sold in Stamford, Connecticut, for twenty-five dollars.

After seeing Reston safely in prison, Mr. Comstock called at Mr. Howe's house again to confer with Reston's wife.

"Lily, I've come to see if you can tell me anything more about these burglars."

"No, sir," was the prompt answer, "I told you everything I knew the other night."

"Oh, no, you didn't; for Ed's arrested, and he's confessed."

"Eddy Reston arrested!" cried his wife. "Where is he?"

"In the lockup."

"I'll go and see him."

"No, you won't."

Mr. Comstock then showed the woman a list of the things that had been taken. This seemed to stagger her, and she began to cry, or pretended to.

"Eddy didn't break in there," she protested. "Jack Angus broke in, and then he come over and swore at Eddy, who was sitting beside me on our back step, and made Eddy go over to the rectory and help him."

But Mr. Comstock found that Lily had furnished the men with matches from Mr. Howe's house, by a comparison with the evidence that he had been laughed at for slipping into his pocket. He also found stolen plunder under the Howes' back porch. And when Mrs. Reston found how much Mr. Comstock knew, she told him in full detail of various burglaries. The result was that Mr. Comstock recovered the proceeds of a dozen or fifteen marauding expeditions, and in some cases was able to take the stolen goods back to their owners before the owners even knew that they had been robbed. Joel Cisco's new G. A. R. suit proved to be part of the proceeds of a burglary of a few Sundays earlier, when the house of a Baptist minister in another New Jersey town had been entered.

It had been an eventful Sunday, but it was not quite over. After his interview with Lily, Mr. Comstock took Reston himself from the jail, warned him that he would shoot and stop him if he tried to run, as his charge of felony warranted, and then got the man to show him where the stolen goods were concealed. When he is dealing with a man

who has committed crime Mr. Comstock has a convincing way with him, as a good many have had occasion to know.

That evening Mr. Comstock saw the police authorities and left orders with them to place under arrest every tramp or suspicious looking person who might be found in Summit the next day during his absence. The following morning, he took the first train to New York, went to police headquarters, and secured the detail of a special policeman, went with him to Goldstein's place, and demanded the stuff that had been brought to him by two men in a horse and buggy on a given date. The pawnbroker denied all knowledge of the matter.

"Well, I'll take these teaspoons in your show-case," said Mr. Comstock and he helped himself to the duplicates of the rectory silver.

After they had made Goldstein give up all that he had of the stolen goods in his own place, he took them to a pawnshop in Ninety-fifth Street where they recovered the balance of the silverware, and some other articles; then they went together to a son-in-law's place, and gathered in the French clock and parlour ornaments.

Goldstein was locked up; and at noon the same day Comstock and Bonnell went together to Stamford. At the proper livery stable they pointed out Bonnell's horse and buggy, informed the proprietor that these were stolen goods and that Bonnell was their owner; and then Mr. Comstock, leaving Bonnell to take care of his property, took the train for New York and reached Summit about six o'clock.

As he dismounted from the cars he was told, "We've got a tramp down at the lockup for you." At the station house Mr. Comstock took a look at his man through a hole in the door before his man saw him. As Comstock suddenly greeted him, the man threw his hands up across his chest, defensively. "This is no tramp," thought Mr. Comstock to himself. "He knows the inside of state's prison."

"What's your name?" he asked.

"George Wright," came the answer.

"They call you Jack, don't they?"

"Yes."

"Jack Angus?"

"Well, what of it if they do?"

"Nothing, only I want you for burglary."

"Young fellow, you'll have to prove that."

"That's easy," replied Mr. Comstock. "I've got the stuff you took over to Goldstein's from the rectory; I've got the horse and buggy you took up to Stamford and sold for twenty-five dollars; and I've got your pal next door."

Without further discussion, Mr. Comstock took his tramp out, handcuffed him to an officer, then went for Reston and brought both men before a magistrate, where they were committed to the Elizabeth jail in default of bail to await examination.

One afternoon after the arrests had been made, Mr. Comstock visited Joel Cisco's home again. The father and mother were out just then, but the mother came in while Mr. Comstock was talking with the children. Mr. Comstock told her that he wanted the pearl-handled cutlery that he had seen on the table the Sunday morning of his previous visit. As he said this he noticed that one of the little girls looked towards the front window, while the mother, intending to be unseen in her action, telegraphed some words across to the girl by shaking her thumb at her, and the child looked away from the window. Mr. Comstock changed the subject of

the conversation, but a little later he spoke of the cutlery once more. Again the child looked towards the window, and again the mother made the signal with her thumb, and the child changed the direction of her look.

After this had been repeated once or twice with the same result, Mr. Comstock asked one of the boys if he had a hammer. It was brought; and without a word the visitor went towards the front window, put the claw of the hammer into a knot-hole in the floor, ripped up a piece of the flooring, and asked one of the boys to get him the knives and forks. They were at once fished out.

Now the police department at Summit did not feel very happy over Mr. Comstock's clean up of the burglaries which they had failed to stop. A police official took the two men under the committal to the Elizabeth jail, but before their examination Mr. Comstock learned that a regrettable plan had been arranged. The plan was simply that when the police should be bringing the men back for their examination, they were to be allowed to go into a road house for a drink, and there make their escape.

Mr. Comstock reported what he had learned

to the District Attorney at Elizabeth. The District Attorney at once sent Comstock before the Grand Jury, four indictments were filed against each man, and bench warrants were lodged against them with the warden. These indictments superseded the earlier complaints, and took the men entirely out of the jurisdiction of the magistrate. When the police official came down for his men, he found that he couldn't get them.

Reston pleaded guilty on the four indictments, and was sentenced to eight years.

Angus got ten years on each indictment.

Reston's wife Lily was indicted as an accomplice, and pleaded guilty. She was about to become a mother, and sentence was suspended.

Joel Cisco got two years as a receiver of stolen goods.

Mr. Comstock had kept faith with the president of the Summit Town Council, and Summit took a long and grateful breath of relief.

XVI

AFTER FORTY YEARS

WHEN the chapters of this life story of Mr. Comstock were first coming before the public, he raised the question with the biographer as to the title that had been chosen for the work, "Anthony Comstock, Fighter." "How would it strike you," he wrote, "to make my title read, 'Fighter for the Right,' or, 'Fighter for the Children,' or, 'Fighter for Public Morals'? Just 'Fighter' leaves me in bad company. There are so many prize-fighters, drunken fighters, strike fighters, that I would like to be classified as outside of the ring. How does this strike you?"

This was a reasonable suggestion; but the following reply was made as expressing the thought of both the publisher and the biographer: "We appreciate what you say, and yet we both believe that the use of your name alongside the word 'fighter' brings the word 'fighter' into good company. You are too widely known as a man strong and

It is Worth a Life-time of Persecution and Peril, Mr. Comstock Believes, to Make the World a Cleaner, Safer Place for One Such Boy as This.

unswerving for the right to be hurt in any way or brought into bad company by having the word 'fighter' alongside your name. We want to have the word 'fighter' exalted into a position that is made possible by linking your name with it, just as I believe the apostle Paul was a fighter, and many another stalwart man of your type and Paul's. Yours is a glorious, victorious fight, and you have honoured and are daily honouring the title. Other men might need to have that title qualified as you suggest, but you do not need this."

For Mr. Comstock has fought during these forty years as in the sight of God, and in the power of God. He has found guidance and strength in three points that his mother gave him long before he had any thought of being commissioned in this lifelong conflict with the powers of evil. This was her counsel:

"Before every effort, prayer.

"Over all prayer, 'Thy will be done.'

"After prayer, put yourself in the way of receiving the answer: be up and doing."

Only as he has rested down as a little child upon the promised protection and strength of the heavenly Father, and then has risen

up veritably in the strength of the Lord to let the Father's will be done through him, at any cost to him, has he been enabled to continue, without fainting, the long drawn out campaign.

How unquenchably burns his spirit of determined persistence even in these later years is shown from the following extract from a letter written in 1908:

"You may be interested to know that on Tuesday, at half-past nine, I was at work here in the office [New York]. In the afternoon, at three o'clock, I was in Providence, Rhode Island, before the Federal Grand Jury, where I had a party indicted. I took supper in Boston, and arose about three o'clock on Wednesday morning in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. I went to a hotel and had about two and one-half hours' sleep, when I got up, and went out to hunt up a United States Commissioner, who very kindly got up out of bed to sign my warrants, which I had already prepared for his signature. I had about ten minutes for breakfast, and then took the 6:45 train for East Hardwick, Vermont, where I arrived in a snow-storm. I hired a carriage and drove about a mile into the country,

stopped at a farmhouse, and asked a boy who came out of the wood-shed if Leon was home. He said, 'Yes, he's in there.' I jumped out of the carriage and went into the wood-shed, and found the party I was after actually employed in his developing-room, in one corner of the wood-shed. Fortunately for me, he had the door unlocked and open. He came out as I entered and we walked back, and I was fortunate enough to seize the negatives from which he was making his infamous pictures, and also his stock in trade.

"We gave him a chance to wash up and dress, then drove about two miles and a half across country, flagged a train at a flag station, and were back in St. Johnsbury about noon, where I had this man committed by the Commissioner on two charges, in default of $1,000 bail on each charge. I placed him in jail by order of the Commissioner; took the 2:20 train back to Boston, where I had my supper; and awoke the next morning about six o'clock in New York. I had my breakfast and went to the office.

"This morning I came here about nine o'clock, and had to go immediately to court, where I had another party held to await trial

in our local courts here. This makes ninety-nine arrests for this year."

Yet this spirit of dogged and relentless determination, unsparing of self, which has freed our land from so much vice and peril, lives in the same heart with a spirit of loving kindliness to the needy, whether friend or stranger. Just a week before writing of that strenuous day in New England, Mr. Comstock took another out-of-town trip in order to secure for an aged lady an assignment of a mortgage on some property of hers from the hands of a person whom she very much dreaded.

All the time under fire because of the enmity of those whom he must oppose and defeat, Mr. Comstock's personal record has been subjected to a searching scrutiny, and has met the test. It is interesting to read the estimate of him which was given in a popular article a few years ago in a monthly magazine known as *The Bohemian*. The writer, who called Mr. Comstock "the man who does our weeding," said:

"It is doubtful if there are many men in the world whose integrity has withstood closer scrutiny. For considerably more than

a quarter of a century the brains, the wealth, and the energies of all the criminal classes have been enlisted against him. They have tried to lead him into temptation, but he has resisted the most seductive traps that they have been able to set for him. The Louisiana Lottery people dangled the bribe of 'independence for life' before his eyes, practically allowing him to name the conditions under which he would agree to let them alone, but he dismissed them with a wave of the hand. . . . They put detectives on his track, hoping that they might discover that he had at some time been guilty of some act of which he might now be ashamed, and great sums of money were offered to the man who should supply them with information that could be used as a club to drive Anthony Comstock into a corner. To earn this reward, many of the sharpest investigators in the land searched the record of his life from the very day he left the cradle in his mother's arms, but not one of these smart Paul Prys was able to put his finger upon a single deed of moral iniquity. Where most of us ordinary individuals would have been driven to the 'tall grass,' Anthony Comstock

accepted these most searching investigations as a matter of course, actually aiding rather than attempting to retard them. As the result it is reasonably safe to assert that there is at least one man in the United States who has no skeleton concealed in his closet, and that man is the Secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice."

A few years later, when a full forty years of service in fighting vice had been rounded out, the officers of his Society paid Mr. Comstock a notable tribute by presenting him with the following "Appreciation":

An Appreciation presented to Anthony Comstock by Officers of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice on the completion of Forty Years of Service:

We, the officers of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, deem the fortieth anniversary of your entrance on your life-work a fitting time to recall your great services and to express our high appreciation of them.

The success of your work demanded the rare combination of qualities which you brought to it—the highest courage, both moral and physical; absolute incorruptibility; the keen discrimination and skill of a detective; the capabilities of a lawyer; and withal stern loyalty to duty, without public recognition, and regardless of popular misjudgment,

and at the same time a Christian tenderness and tact which could win back those whose feet have taken the first wrong step.

We believe that you were as truly raised up and as especially qualified for your work as were Lincoln and Grant for theirs. They led loyal millions in defense of the nation during four years of conflict. For ten times four years you have struggled well-nigh single handed against lewd fellows of the baser sort in defense of the children and youth of the land.

Their enemies and yours have sought your life by open violence and secret craft. They attempted intimidation, bribery and slander; and, when all these had failed, they tried the one remaining weapon—ridicule, which is the final confession of impotent malice. But the word has been verified to you: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

Through all these years you have had the entire confidence of good men who have known your character and your work; and you have had the loyal support of such distinguished citizens as

Samuel Colgate, William E. Dodge, Sr., William E. Dodge, Jr., Morris K. Jesup, Dorman B. Eaton, R. R. McBurney, Welcome G. Hitchcock, Charles E. Whitehead, Kilian Van Rensselaer, Henry R. Jones, James B. Colgate, William Ives Buddington, D. D., James W. Elwell, William F. Lee,

J. M. Cornell, William Johnson, Cephas Brainerd, Elbridge T. Gerry, James A. Bradley and Samuel Thorne.

We hope that you will find endless satisfaction in the measureless good you have done. You have a right to rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for you have been "persecuted for righteousness' sake."

We love you for the enemies you have made; we admire you for the sterling qualities you have shown; and in the name of the silent multitude of parents and youth who will never know their indebtedness to you,

We thank you for the heroic services you have rendered to our country and to humanity.

ANTHONY COMSTOCK
March 3, 1872—March 3, 1912.

FRED E. TASKER	WM. H. KING
JAMES M. BUCKLEY	THEO. L. BECK
JOSIAH STRONG	WM. H. PARSONS
HENRY R. JONES	JOHN C. MARTIN
AUGUSTUS F. LIBBY	WM. C. BEECHER

Mr. Samuel Colgate was president of the Society for twenty-one years, and, like some others, he stood by Mr. Comstock through every vicissitude up to the time of his death. Mr. Jesup and Mr. Dodge were vice-presidents for more than thirty years. None could have been more loyal and loving than Mr. Comstock's Brooklyn pastor, Rev. Wm.

Ives Buddington. These and many other names are precious memories out of his rich past, while he rejoices in the fellowship and sympathy of his living co-workers.

A tangible evidence of the result of Mr. Comstock's work is seen in these facts. Since he commenced he has destroyed something over fifty tons of vile books; 28,425 pounds of stereotype plates for printing such books; 3,984,063 obscene pictures; 16,900 negatives for printing such pictures; 3,646 persons have been arrested, and of these 2,682 have been convicted or pleaded guilty, and 2,180 have been sentenced. If the matters which have been seized were to be transported this would require sixteen freight cars, fifteen loaded with ten tons each, and the other nearly full. If the persons arrested were to be transported, sixty-one passenger coaches would be needed, each with a seating capacity of sixty persons, sixty cars filled, and the other nearly full.

But facts and figures of this sort tell only the smallest and most unimportant part of the real achievements and results of this life-work. Who can say how many of the 42,000,000 boys and girls in this country have been protected and saved from unspeakable

degradation because Mr. Comstock has lived? When the chamber of imagery, when memory's storehouse, has once been given some vile scene or story there has virtually been placed, as Mr. Comstock says, "A noose around the neck, with the end in the Devil's hand." In countless lives, Anthony Comstock has prevented the Devil from getting that particular noose around the neck of hoped-for victims. How sorely is this work needed! "For death is come up into our windows, it is entered into our palaces; to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets" (Jer. ix. 21).

But the day is coming when the fight will be over. It will have yielded its full fruit; and those who have entered into the Way of Life shall dwell in a city that "hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for . . . the lamp thereof is the Lamb. . . . And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it; and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life."

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